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Two Flowers
for the Drag
3
Nari Kusakawa

The s kuya's
father is exposed!
By the creator of
THE PALETTE OF
12 SECRET COLORS!
A visit to an oasis may reveal what happened to Lucien during his five-year absence in the desert. A mysterious sword dancer, who might just have the answers, entertains Shakuya and her two fiancés. And what's this person's connection to Shakuya's exiled father? Then tragedy strikes when Kuwan—while trying to defend the Princess from a band of rogues—is dealt a seemingly fatal blow! This volume also features "Double Crown," a bonus story by author Nari Kusakawa.
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Two Flowers for the Dragon

Volume 3

By Nari Kusakawa

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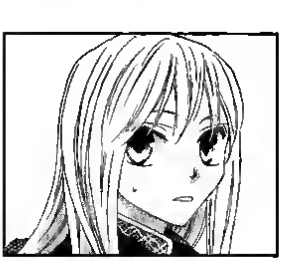
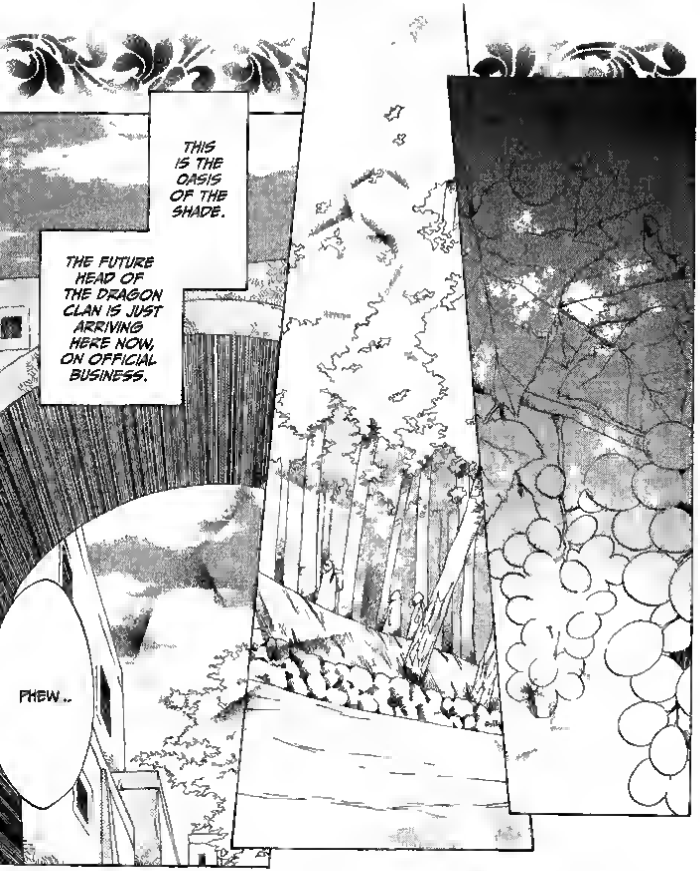


Episode 10
龍の花わずらい
Two Flowers for the Dragon

Episode 10 Preview Cut

Seems like something is hanging in the air between them...


THIS IS THE OASIS OF THE SHADE.
THE FUTURE HEAD OF THE DRAGON CLAN IS JUST ARRIVING HERE NOW, ON OFFICIAL BUSINESS.
PHEW..

I'll check it before it reaches Shakuya-sensei's eyes.
Kuran, who's been my extremely efficient proficient assistant ever since Lucian had first disappeared.
Lucian, who had been missing for five years, suddenly came back with manga skills.
Shakuya, is this "netting" okay?
I, Shakuya, a humble mangaka
have two assistants
SKRTCH
CHEK
TWO ASSISTANTS FOR HER.
cont'nued on pg 38

Well, it's taken a whole day of travelling, but we're here, Lady Shakuya.
NOD
You've been like that nearly the entire time, just stony silence and a few nods of the head..
.. particularly in regards to Lucien and Kuwan!
Any juicy developments?
DAZZLE
I'm stuck with two fiancés...
...but rather than let myself get all stressed out by the situation.
...I decided to face it head on.
Meanwhile, Kuwan hit me with a maximum dose of words that got right to the heart of the matter...
...which also made me feel uncomfortable.
Prepare
Prepare...
to accept my love.
PREPARE
I do not!!
No!
GRRR
Since then, I had a big quarrel with Lucien...
...and now I feel uncomfortable around him.
Shakuya, you have a father complex!

LADY SHAKUYA...
IT SEEMS THAT THE HEADMAN OF THE SHADE IS WAITING FOR YOU IN HERE.

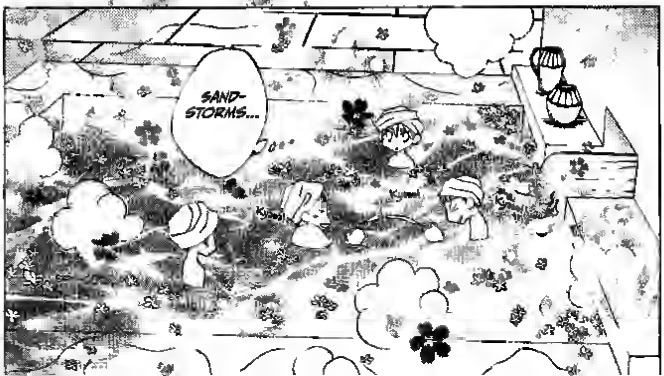
SO THIS IS A DIFFICULT TIME FOR ME.
NOD

YOUR VOICE IS UPSIDE DOWN?!
YOU'RE LOOKING WELL, CHIEF.

OH!
THANK YOU FOR COMING, DRAGON PRINCESS.

YOUR PRESENCE IS GREATLY APPRECIATED.
AS I UNDERSTAND IT, I'M HERE TO AID YOU WITH FLOOD CONTROL.
THE SHADE IS AN OASIS WITH SPRAWLING GRAPE FIELDS..
...SO REGULATING THE WATER TO THE FIELDS IS A PRIORITY.
BUT IT'S ALREADY DUSK..
...SO PLEASE, RECOVER FROM THE FATIGUE OF TRAVEL IN OUR BATHS.
AFTERWARDS, WE'VE GOT A HUMBLE BANQUET PREPARED FOR YOU.
A PARTY OF BODY-GUARDS AND MINORS
I WOULD BE VERY PLEASED TO HAVE YOU SAMPLE THE SHADE'S GRAPE WINE
EH?
HOW HAVE YOUR FIELDS BEEN DOING?
VERY WELL.
IN REGARDS TO WATER, THERE HAS BEEN NO PROBLEM.
...THANKS TO THE DRAGON CLAN.
...WHEN YOU COME OF AGE.

RECENTLY, THIS AREA HAS BEEN BESET BY SANDSTORMS.
I FEAR THAT AT SOME POINT THE SPRING THAT PROVIDES WATER TO THE SHADE WILL BECOME CLOGGED WITH SAND.
SAND, ACTUALLY.
IS THERE A PROBLEM WITH SOMETHING OTHER THAN WATER?
SOME OF THE PEOPLE ARE WORRIED, TOO...


SAND-STORMS...

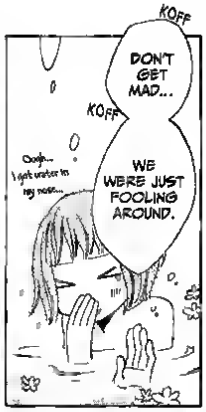
SPLISH...
THAT'S WHAT CAUSED LUCIEN TO GO MISSING YEARS AGO...
LADY SHAKUYA, AREN'T YOU GOING TO TAKE YOUR GLOVES OFF?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? THIS IS A LAYER OF SKIN.
I WONDER IF WHAT THE HEADMAN SAID MADE HIM FEEL UNEASY...
AT LEAST TAKE THEM OFF IN THE BATH.
YOU'RE ON A TRIP! LET YOUR HAIR DOWN!
...OF THE FLOWERS ON YOUR HANDS!!
FLASH
BESIDES, WE WANNA SEE THE PROGRESS..
SPLOOSH
AHH!
FWIP

Hello.

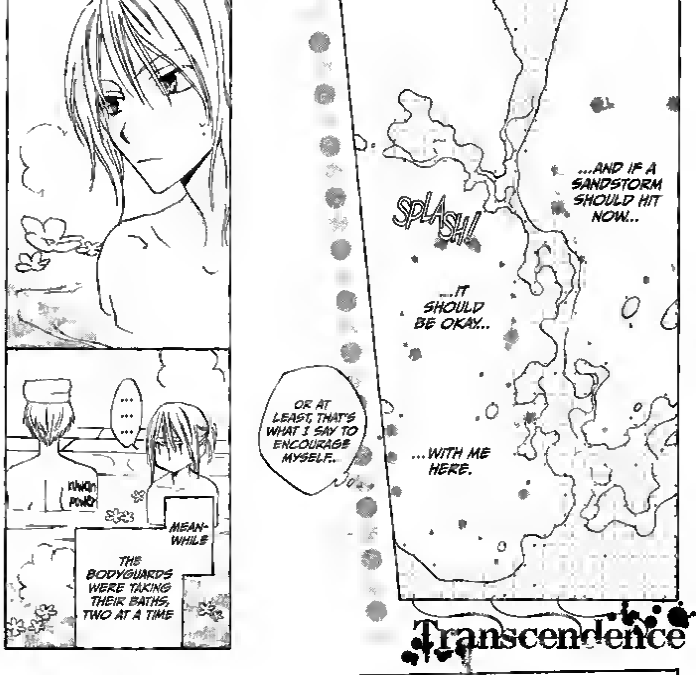
Thank you for getting this book today.

This time around, there are no real bonus pages, just a one-page afterword at the end. As a matter of fact, I did write the usual notes about each episode in this volume, but the only thing that came to mind were comments along the lines of "I didn't have enough time to finish!," "I got this one in just under the deadline!," "I had a hard time making deadline on this one!," so I really don't think you're missing anything by having me exclude them.

My mother has been assisting me all this time, but I've recently hired a young girl assistant to help me with the manuscript. She's the beauty of the three of us.

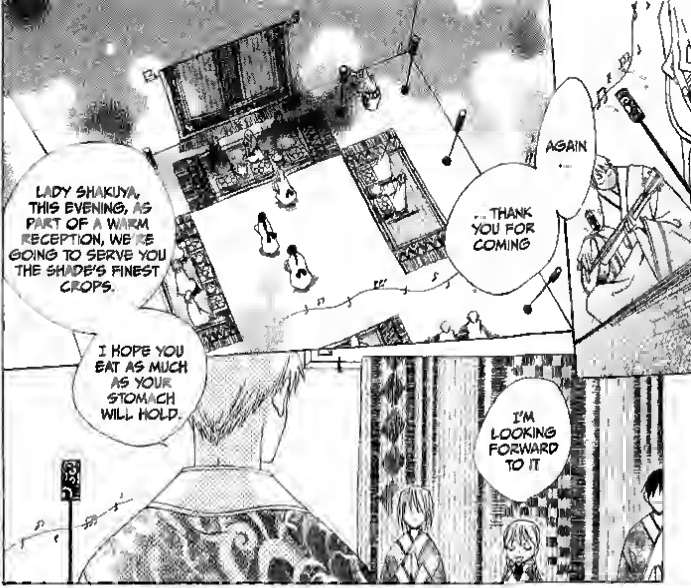


PLIP
NO, NO. IT'S JUST THAT..
...EVER SINCE WE ARRIVED HERE...
...MY POWER HAS BEEN BUBBLING OVER.
WHEN WE GET HOME, I'D BETTER REPORT TO MY MOTHER...
THAT MUST MEAN YOU'RE READY TO WORK!
...THE HEADMAN'S WORRIES ABOUT THE SPRING.



Transcendence

THE BANQUET HALL IS THIS WAY.
WOOOOOW
HE JUST GOT OUT OF HIS BATH!!
HE'S WEARING DIFFERENT CLOTHES THAN USUAL!!
KYAAA!! KYAAA!!
GULP!
NO, NO, NO, I'M HERE ON OFFICIAL BUSINESS ...!!
YES, THE BANQUET HALL...
AFTER YOUR EYES STOP GLISTENING.
THROW
SPIN
WIPE
WIPE
LET'S GO.


LADY SHAKUYA, THIS EVENING, AS PART OF A WARM RECEPTION, WE'RE GOING TO SERVE YOU THE SHADE'S FINEST CROPS.
I HOPE YOU EAT AS MUCH AS YOUR STOMACH WILL HOLD.
... THANK YOU FOR COMING AGAIN ...
I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT

EH?! WHY?! WHERE DID THAT COME FROM?!
I'LL PEEL GRAPES FOR YOU.
SHAKUYA ...
D-DID YOU FORGET WE'RE STILL FIGHTING?
A PROTRACTED ARGUMENT IS BORING.

...SO..
..AS A PEACE OFFERING...
SHAKUYA MEANS A LOT TO ME..AND I MEAN TO TAKE GOOD CARE OF HER...
LUCIEN...
YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE YOUR LIVELY SELF IS SOMETHING WRONG?
IF YOU EAT THIS...
MISS SWE, IF IT'S TRUE THAT YOU HAD AN AFFAIR WITH SHAKUYA'S FATHER, I'M GOING TO HOLD IT AGAINST YOU.
YOU SHIFTED YOUR EYES AWAY. MEANING I'M RIGHT ON TARGET.
ULP
I BET HE'S SERIOUS ABOUT THE SAINT-STORIES...
I'LL BE BACK TO THE ENERGETIC LUCIEN YOU KNOW AND LOVE

...THEN YOU SHOULD EAT IT YOURSELF
KA-CHA
IF YOU WANT TO BECOME ENERGETIC...
I'LL PEEL THE GRAPES FOR LADY SHAKUYA, LUCIEN.
Ow! Hearing things right...?!
KUWAN ...!!
YOU JUST CONCENTRATE ON YOUR OWN DINNER.
I HEAR GRAPES...
...ARE VERY NUTRITIOUS.
PLOOP

DON'T GRIN!!
DON'T YOU DARE LET A SILLY GRIN CROSS YOUR FACE, SHAKUYA!
DO YOU WANT HIM TO TELL YOU TO WASH YOUR FACE AGAIN AND BLOW THIS ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME CHANCE?!
SNAP
LADY SHAKUYA, SAY "AHHH..."
AAAAHHH
WHAT I THOUGHT WAS AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM...
... IS ABOUT TO BECOME REALITY.
THUMP
THUMP
LADY SHAKUYA..

PLEASE...
..OPEN YOUR MOUTH
MH...
SURE.
AAAAH...
THUMP
Transcendence

TH...
THIS...
WIPE
ANOTHER?
BLUSH
NO...
I THINK I'LL...
...FEED MYSELF FROM HERE ON IN.
THIS ISN'T...
...THE KUWAYAMA I KNOW!!

I BELIEVE I'M PREPARED...
MAYBE I LIED!!
I'M NOT SURE WHETHER I CAN GET BY.
IT FEELS LIKE I'VE COME TO BUY A DESIGNER BAG...
...WITH PLAY MONEY
That is
all I have.
"IF YOU TRULY LOVE ME...
...THEN PREPARE TO ACCEPT MY LOVE."
HE SEEMS KIND OF.. KIND OF DIRTY-MINDED!!
TRICKLE
TRICKLE
TRICKLE
TRICKLE
UNTIL NOW...
...HE REALLY DID JUST PROTECT ME.
BUT THIS IS DIFFERENT.

I MIGHT BE IN OVER MY HEAD CROSSING SWORDS WITH KUWAN.
EVERYONE, DOES THE FOOD AGREE WITH YOU?
WE HAVE PREPARED A LITTLE ENTERTAINMENT FOR YOU AS WELL THIS EVENING
I HOPE YOU ENJOY IT.
FOOO
MARVEL AT..
...THIS FANTASTIC DANCE.
FUUUSH...

月光!!...

SHE'S BEAUTIFUL!
MY TEACHER ...!!
A SWORD DANCE...
DID YOUR TEACHER DANCE LIKE THIS LUCIEN?
WHY AREN'T YOU SAYING ANYTHING?
BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T EAT MY PEACE OFFERING
EH?
OH... I SEE
THIS IS...
...MY TEACHER, SHAKUYA.
I WOULD NEVER HAVE THOUGHT THAT I'D BE REUNITED WITH HER HERE...

Transcendence
SHE LOOKED ME IN THE EYES...
I WANT THESE SUSPICIONS ABOUT HER TO BE THE PRODUCT OF MY IMAGINATION...
... BECAUSE IF SHE HADN'T HAVE BEEN AROUND, I WOULDN'T BE THE WAY I AM TODAY
JINGLE
JINGLE
JINGLE
THE PERSON WHO TOOK ME IN...
AND TAUGHT ME THE SWORD...

FINISH
RATTLE
RATTLE
SQUEEZE
RATTLE
RATTLE
BUT IF...
...MY SUSPICIONS AREN'T UNFOUNDED...
...FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS HAS BEEN WRONG!
...THEN EVERYTHING I'VE KNOWN...

THUNK!
AH!
HM

THANK YOU!
A SCORPION ...!
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY.
IT MUST HAVE SLIPPED IN HERE SOME-HOW.
I THOUGHT SHE WAS SOME KIND OF ASSASSIN. .
FOR A SECOND THERE, I HAD MY DOUBTS ABOUT HER TOO
BUT BEING BEATEN BY A DANCER IN THE AREA OF INSECT EXTERMINATION IS A FAILURE ON MY PART.
LUCIEN ...?
WHAT'S WRONG? YOU'RE WHITE AS A SHEET.
...I'M OKAY.

Are you sure?
JINGLE
SNATCH!
AH! I LOST!
YOU BETTER GET ALONG WITH HIM!
I'M WITH LUCIEN!
THAT'S ALL RIGHT. I DON'T THINK HE'S GOT IT IN HIM.
SLOSH

F.W.P!
F.W.P!
YESSIR!
I'LL CHANGE INTO MY GUARD OUTFIT!
YESSIR!
ROGER!
ONE TEAM GUARDS LADY SHAKUYA AND HER RETINUE'S ROOM...
...WHILE THE OTHER TEAM SLEEPS.
AFTER FOUR HOURS, WE'LL SWITCH
Sleep... Huh...
I DON'T THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO CATCH A WINK AFTER THE SHOCK I HAD...
TUMBLE
Kyaa!
WRIGGLE WRIGGLE WRIGGLE
How long have you been in there...?
MM?
WIGGLE

I'M PUTTING OUT THE LIGHT.
Huh?
Where's the one with dotted eyes?
...NO.
NOTHING.
AH...
?
DID YOU SAY SOMETHING?
HEY..
WHO PUT A TIGER IN MY SUITCASE?
GRRRR
YEP!
HE PROBABLY GOT IN THERE HIMSELF ..
RATTLE
Transcendence

Fooo..
Fooo..
Fsss..
Fooo..
MM...
RUSTLE..
Fooo..
Fsss..
Fmm..
THE POP JUST BREATHES HEAVILY IN HIS SLEEP..
NOTHING WRONG..
...ARE SHAKY, AS IF THEY DON'T WANT TO COOPERATE.
MY LEGS...
SNEAK..
TA

FWAP
SHADE SENTRIES...
He's going out...
MM...
LUCIEN?
WHERE IS HE SNEAKING OFF TO?
That was a suspicious noise.
FWUMP
AH...
OKAY.
FOOO
LADY SHAKUYA, LIGHTS OUT!

WHAT F...
I KEEP THINKING HOW ODD HE LOOKED...
I DON'T THINK HE WAS ALL RIGHT TONIGHT.
"DID YOUR TEACHER DANCE LIKE THIS, LUCIEN?"
HIS FACE... IS PALE!
... THAT WAS HIS TEACHER?
RATTLE

MAYBE HE WENT TO MEET HER...
BUT WHY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT...?
FWAP
YOU DON'T APPEAR TO BE SLEEP-WALKING..
Kuran...
CLOP
CLOP

DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT.
...MISS SWE
...TELLS ME YOU'RE IN A HURRY TO GET OUT OF HERE.
LEAVING SO LATE AT NIGHT...
CLOP...
Transcendence
I FOUND THIS...
DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS..?
...AT THE DRAGON'S SHRINE.

Episode 10: The End

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龍の花わずらい

Two Flowers for the Dragon

Episode 11

I ALWAYS ASSUMED IT WAS BECAUSE SHE WAS A WOMAN
SHE ALWAYS WAS AN UNUSUAL PERSON.
...BUT I NEVER GAVE THAT ASPECT MUCH THOUGHT.
BUT NOW IT APPEARS THERE WAS MUCH ABOUT HER I WAS UNAWARE OF.
Miss Sue, you have beautiful hair
THANK you.
I WAS WITH HER EVERY DAY
PROBLEM #1: INVITE A LADY TO TEA
Uh-Uh I can't!
C-Could you get the maidens aside until we make our deadline...?!
Shukuyo
Shukuyo-sensei...
If you think you'll do a better job than this.
Certainly. If your pride is worth, take it.
RUMBLE...
RUMBLE...
...and expect Shukuyo-sensei to keep you on as an assistant here?
Okay, show me how it's done.
Do it again
"you can't even do decent "netting"
two assistants for her (2)
continued on pg. 68

THAT'S THE KIND OF PERSON SHE WAS.
...THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US ALWAYS REMAINED THE SAME.
...BUT WHETHER ONE YEAR HAD PASSED OR FIVE...

ON THE OTHER HAND...
SQUEEZE
WITH EVERY NEW STEP I TOOK...
...I PUT MORE TRUST IN HER
...THE TRAINING SHE GAVE ME MADE ME A LITTLE BIT STRONGER EVERY DAY

I WANT TO KNOW..
A LONG TIME AGO...
WERE YOU INTIMATE...
...WITH SHAKUYA'S FATHER, HAKURAI?

AT THE DRAGON SHRINE
A HANDMAID SAW A "DANCER".
JUST OUTSIDE OF HAKURAI'S ROOM.
IN THIS JOU-NAL...
...IS A DRAWING OF A WOMAN WHO LOOKS VERY MUCH LIKE YOU.
IT SEEMS THAT AS THE HUSBAND OF THE HEAD OF THE DRAGON CLAN
...HE WAS BANISHED FROM THE OASIS
THIS BROKE SHAKUYA'S HEART...
SOME TIME AFTER THAT, I LOST MY MEMORIES...
...AND YOU TOOK ME IN.
YOU SAID YOU DIDN'T KNOW WHAT MY TATTOO MEANT.
Transcendence

IS THAT TRUE?
"IF YOU WISH TO BELIEVE ME, YOU MUSTN'T ASK ME QUESTIONS."
"IF YOU DOUBT ME, KILL YOUR DESIRE TO BELIEVE."
...
PLEASE ANSWER ME.

I WANT TO HEAR THE ANSWER TO THAT TOO!!
SHAKUYA?!

LADY SHAKUYA WITNESSED YOU SNEAKING AWAY, LUCIEN.
YES! A BOLT FROM THE BLUE!
That's it!
SHOCKED
I NEVER EXPECTED IT WOULD LEAD TO THIS MUCH TROUBLE.
...AND GET LIKE A JOLT OF LIGHTNING? THAT'S NOT QUITE RIGHT. A BOLT OF THUNDER? NO, THAT'S NOT IT EITHER...
GET HIT BY A BOLT FROM THE BLUE?
I FOLLOW AFTER LUCIEN..
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE..?
IF THIS WOMAN TRULY WAS MY FATHER'S PARTNER IN ADULTERY, WHAT WERE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?
IF YOU GOT YOUR ANSWER, WERE YOU PLANNING TO LET ME IN ON IT?
...LUCIEN...
WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THIS?

EHP BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH OF THAT I SHOULD ACTUALLY SAY...
QUIVER
SO MUCH ABOUT MY FATHER..
...
..
.
. HAS BEEN BOTTLED UP OVER THE YEARS, I..
I APOLOGIZE FOR NOT SAYING ANYTHING...
IS THIS WHY..
...YOU WERE SO DEJECTED ALL DAY?

TAP
LUCIEN, YOU WEAKLING!
MISS...
CLOP
H...
I'M RIGHT?

MISS SWE...!
WEAKLING
NOT WITHOUT ANSWERING!!
IF YOU DON'T ANSWER...
WAIT! YOU CAN'T LEAVE LIKE THIS!
EHH?!
SHE NEITHER CONFIRMS NOR DENIES.
JUST GIVES LUCIEN INSTRUCTION.

...I'LL COME AFTER YOU!!
HMM...
SHAKUYA!

Horses

When I was in elementary school, I got to ride a pony once. When I was in high school, I had the opportunity to ride a horse. I remember the horse strolled along at a nice, leisurely pace and it's always been an experience I've wanted to repeat. But I've always wondered why horses poop while they walk.

And speaking of "toilet talk," I was at the zoo once when I saw an elephant do his business. His urine came down hard, as if someone kicked over a bucket. At the time, small as I was, I was shocked. It was pee on a grand scale. That's been the thing I've most remembered about going to the zoo after all these years. Damn elephant.

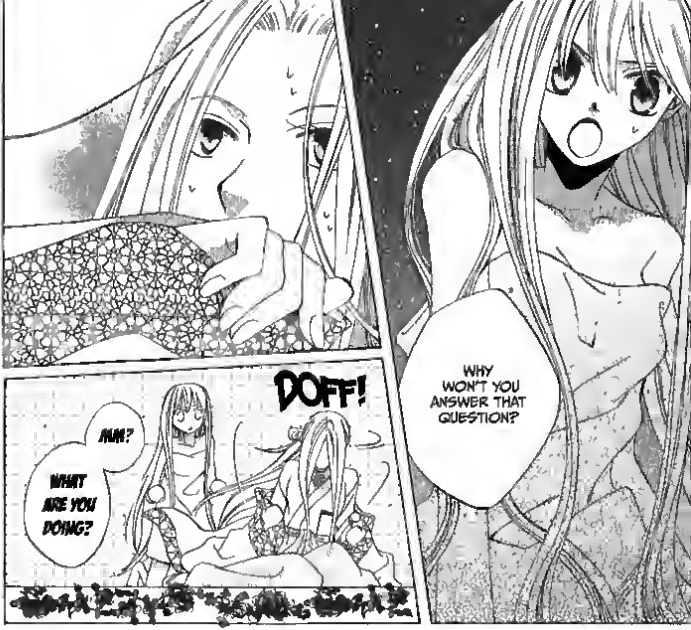
AT A TIME LIKE THIS, HER TRANSFORMATION CAN BE ADVANTAGEOUS
SHE GRABBED A CLOAK BEFORE FLYING OFF...
WHICH INDICATES SHE'S IN CONTROL OF HERSELF.
TA
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ANYONE ABOUT THIS?
IF YOUR MENTOR IS INDEED CONNECTED TO LORD HAKURAI...
...
...
...
...HER ACTIVITIES THESE PAST FIVE YEARS ARE MYSTERIOUS... POSSIBLY EVEN CRIMINAL.

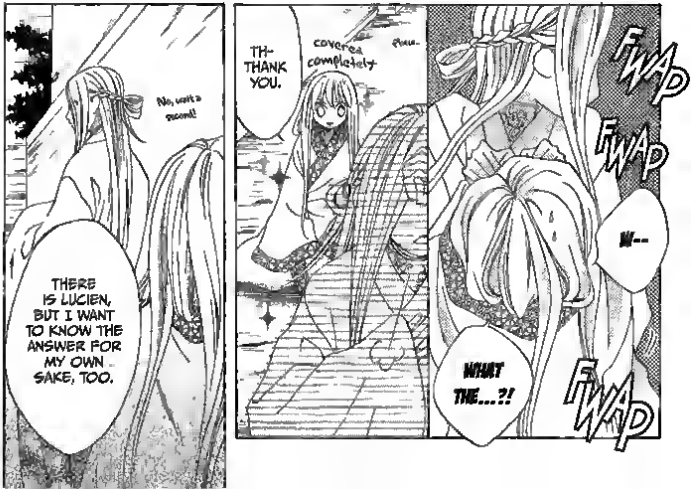
LUCIEN, PART OF YOU WISHED TO COVER FOR YOUR MENTOR.
..WHILE AT THE SAME TIME...
...IF IT BECAME CLEAR THAT LADY SHAKUYA HAD AN "ENEMY"...
...YOU WANTED TO KEEP HER AT A DISTANCE FROM IT, NO?
.. YOU'RE EXACTLY RIGHT.
YOU SNUCK OUT OF THE ROOM.
A PERFECT WHAT? A PERFECT BLUNDER?
...THE WORDS WOULDN'T COME OUT OF SHAKUYA'S MOUTH.
YOU MIGHT AS WELL CRY ABOUT IT THAT WOULD MAKE IT PERFECT.
—AND WERE SPOTTED BY THE ONE PERSON YOU WERE ESPECIALLY HIDING FROM.

Transcendence
IS THIS WHY YOU WERE SO DEJECTED ALL DAY?
...I DIDN'T..
RIP
DAMMIT!!
AHHH ..
IVE STILL GOT A LONG WAY TO GO...
NATURALLY.
PART OF THIS PROBLEM HAS BEEN PLAGUING HER FOR YEARS.
AND YET...

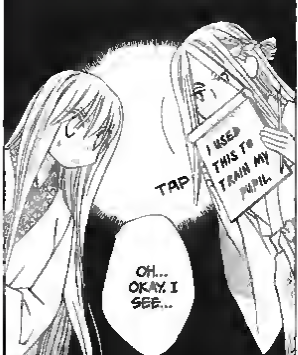
CHUFF CHUFF
CHUFF CHUFF
CHUFF CHUFF
ENTER AN ALLEY...
TURN RIGHT...
TURN LEFT...
CHUFF CHUFF
CHUFF CHUFF
DID I LOSE HER?
CHUFF CHUFF
YOU! HORSE AND RIDER...

STOP!!
FWOOOSH
CRASSH!!
WHUMP
Whinny...!
GOT...
...YOU!


WHY WON'T YOU ANSWER THAT QUESTION?
DOFF!
MM?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?


No, wait a second!
THERE IS LUCIEN, BUT I WANT TO KNOW THE ANSWER FOR MY OWN SAKE, TOO.
TH-THANK YOU.
covered completely
FWAP
FWAP
W--
WHAT THE...?!
FWAP

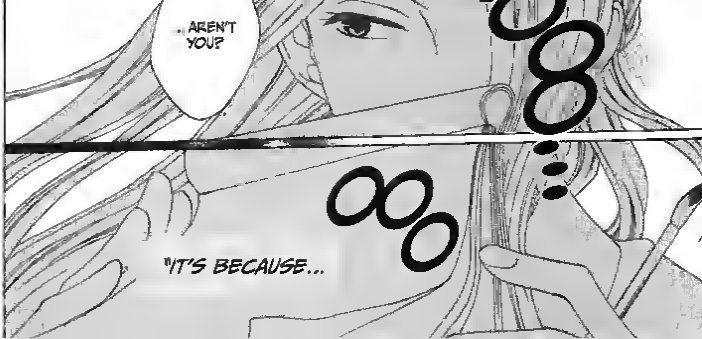
IF YOU KNOW MY FATHER'S WHERE-ABOUTS, PLEASE TELL ME
EVER SINCE I WAS LITTLE, I'VE WANTED TO HEAR FROM HIS OWN MOUTH THE REASON HE DESTROYED OUR FAMILY.
ACTUALLY...
WHETHER THE MARRIAGE WAS JUST A POLITICAL ARRANGEMENT AFTER ALL...
...OR THERE REALLY WAS "ANOTHER WOMAN" LIKE EVERYBODY SAYS..
. IT LOOKS LIKE I'M GOING TO HAVE AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE, BUT I'M HAPPY ABOUT IT...
ARE YOU MY FATHER'S LOVER?
...
THEN EXPLAIN WHY YOU TRIED TO ESCAPE.


TAP
I USED THIS TO TRAIN MY PUPIL.
OH... OKAY. I SEE...

I HEARD FROM LUCIEN THAT YOU DON'T SPEAK.
THAT ASIDE FROM "YES" OR "NO," YOU CONVERSE IN WRITING..
.....

FOOO...

NEVER-THELESS, YOU'RE AVOIDING ME...
..AREN'T YOU?
FOOO...


OOO
"IT'S BECAUSE...

...YOU'RE YOUNGER AND CUTER THAN ME."
THE WEDDING TATTOO..
..ON THE BACK OF MY FATHER'S HAND WAS ERASED...
...BUT THE BRAND OF BANISHMENT ON HIS FOREHEAD MUST STAND OUT..
.. EVEN IF HE SOMEHOW HAD IT..
"I'VE NEVER SEEN IT."
SAND-STORM'S COMING ...!

SOME-BODY HELP ME OVER HERE!
I NEED TO GET THE CATTLE OUT OF DANGER!
CHILDREN, SHUT THE WINDOWS!
IT'S GOING TO HIT THE FIELDS!
HOW MANY DOES THAT MAKE THIS MONTH?
IT'S A BIG ONE..
SWISH
IF THAT'S TRUE, YOUR ATTITUDE DOESN'T MAKE SENSE!!
I NEED TO SPEAK WITH YOU MO—
FWOOSH
TPP

FWAP
!
DRIP
HORSE, I'M TALKING TO YOU!!
IF YOU RUN OFF, THERE'LL BE HELL TO PAY!!
SWISH
AH!
WHO ARE YOU?!
NEIGHHHH

I'LL GO AFTER HER.
KUWAN!
STICK TO YOUR OWN DUTIES, LADY SHAKUYA.
TA
FWUMP
LUCIEN...
NO MATTER HOW MUCH SHE RUNS...
SHE WON'T CLEAR THE OASIS BEFORE THE SANDSTORM HITS.
I'M SORRY.
I SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE CONSIDERATE TOWARDS YOU, SHAKUYA.

IT'S BEEN MY INTENTION...
.. TO BE A MUCH BETTER MAN THAN I WAS FIVE YEARS AGO, BUT..
BUT?
ON A SURFACE OF ANXIETY AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE...
...MY WEAK HEART TREMBLES FOR YOU
...IT WOULD MAKE ME SEEM PATHETIC, SO IT'S A SECRET
SHAKUYA
CAN I KISS YOU?
SWISH
EH?! WHY?!
BY NO MEANS!!
THEN LET ME...
CAN I HUG YOU?
NO WAY!
FORGET ABOUT IT!!

...HOLD YOUR HAND, IF ONLY FOR A MOMENT.
...
...
...
FOO
OO
OO
RUSTLE...

THIS HAND...
...IS GOING TO BRING MY TEACHER BACK HERE
PECH
PECH
SQUEEZE!
...SO I CAN DISPEL MY REPUTATION AS A WEAKLING AND A BLUNDERER.

THEN I'LL SEE YOU LATER!
CLOP
I KNOW.
GET ON THE HORSE AND RIDE BACK TO THE HEADMAN'S RESIDENCE
THE KING WAS A PONIES.
Last Last
YOU RIDE THE HORSE.
I'M GOING TO TRANSFORM HERE!
..DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME
IT'S MY DUTY TO PROTECT THE PEOPLE HERE FROM THE SAND..
..AS MUCH AS I'M ABLE.
HE'S BACK TO NORMAL.
YOU'RE TELLING ME TO RIDE THE HORSE TO CHRISTMAS MARKET??
Episode 11: The End

Episode 12 Preview Cut

This didn't turn out that cute, especially the tiger ears and tail.

Episode 13 Preview Cut

Yes, I left his pants open.

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Episode 12 Preview Cut

This didn't turn out that cute, especially the tiger ears and tail.

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Episode 13 Preview Cut

Yes, I left his pants open.

Episode 12

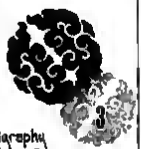
CHUFF CHUFF
CHUFF CHUFF
HORSE...
DO YOU REMEMBER ME?
BEEN A LONG TIME, HASN'T IT?
PUT YOUR INSTINCTS TO WORK TO TRACK DOWN MISS SWE!
IF YOU'RE ON THE MONEY, I'LL GIVE YOU A GOOD BRUSHING LIKE I USED TO!
A BRUSHING BY LUCIEN
A SOOTHING OPERATION
TWINKLE
DOZE-KOLEG
How about it? I gave you a cup of coffee?
SIGH
The way you're acting even sitting at the desk, nothing's going to get done.
An energy drink's more effective than coffee! This is what Shakuya really needs.
Here, Shakuya. Open your mouth. I'll pour it down.
Shakuya-sensei...
In this pond, the tiger's becoming a dragon...
Play with me!
Eh? Sorry!
I haven't had any decent sleep in days
so I lose consciousness even while inking
Two Assistants for her. (3)
continued on pg 98

CHUFF CHUFF
MISS SWE...!
I'M COUNTING ON YOU!
GLANCE
GLANCE
)))
I'm a police officer. Have you seen a suspicious woman around here?
whoa??
Transcendence

TAK
SHE'S BECOME...
...A MAGNIFICENT DRAGON.
THAP!
TOK
SH..

THWAK!
FWOOO
FWOOO
A SPRAY OF WATER SHOULD REPEL THE DUST...

BUZZ
BUZZ
BUZZ
ROARRRR
LOOK! THE SAND-STORM ...!
IT'S BEEN BLOCKED!
THE SKY IS MISTY WITH MOISTURE!
INCRED-IBLE ..
THE DRAGON IS CLEVER AS WELL AS MIGHTY...!
RIGHT? SHE'S INCREDIBLE, RIGHT?
THAT'S OUR MISTRESS!
Ela-bachi!
WHY IS MY MASTER KUWAN NOWHERE AROUND?
BUT WHY DID LADY SHAKUYA SLIP OUT OF THE ROOM TO BEGIN WITH?
HOW DID LUCIEN CHANGE INTO A TIGER?
SMACK SMACK
ANYWAY, THERE SURE IS A LOT OF SAND AROUND HERE.
IT'S JUST AS THE HEADMAN WAS SAYING.
Hmm...
IF THIS IS AN EVERYDAY OCCURRENCE, THEN I CAN SEE WHY THE PEOPLE ARE WORRIED.
ROARR
RRR



Calligraphy

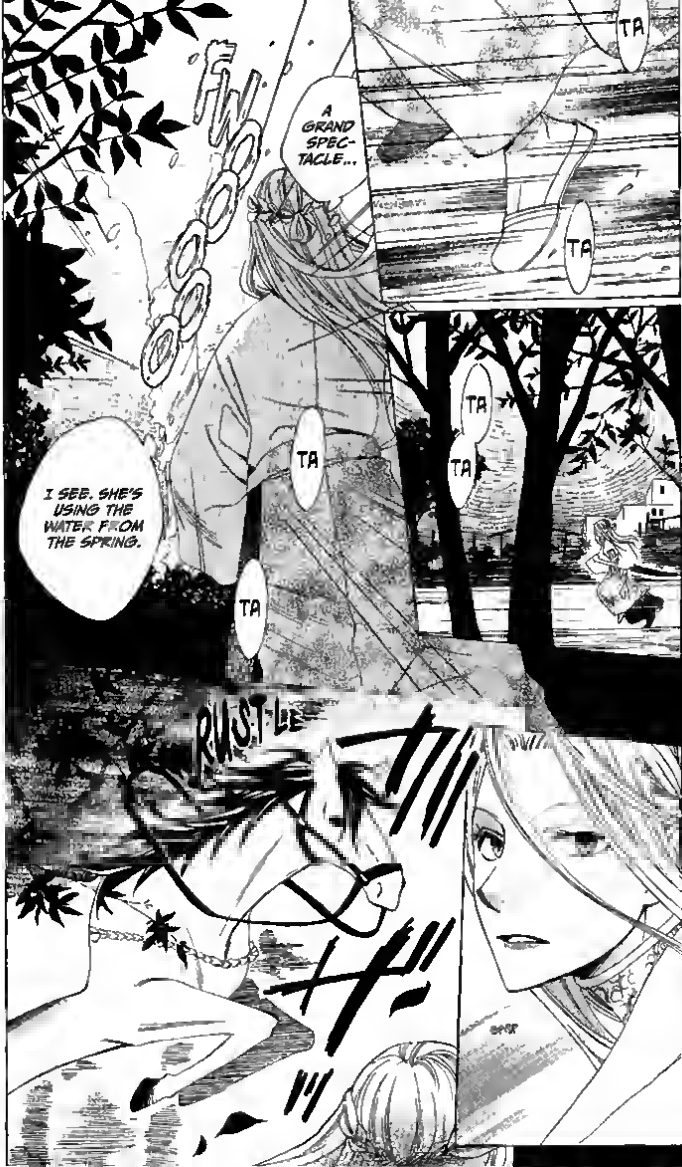
I used to study it as a kid.

The inkstone that I used for a long time had a black ink-stained, crusty surface that I thought gave me "calligraphy cred," so I used the entire stone, even to its edges, to give it even more of a "used" quality. And I didn't hate doing the actual writing either.

At some point, I received a paperweight that was modeled on an abacus (and now I think, "Why an abacus?!"). I painted it with ink and now it serves to hold the manuscript down.

A disappointing result when it comes to studying calligraphy, but forgive me!

OKAY.
MAKE MY WAY TO THE UPPER AIR...
...SO I CAN GET A GRIP ON THE SCALE OF THIS SAND-STORM.
THE PROBLEM IS...
IMAGE
...FIGURING OUT HOW LONG THIS IS GOING TO TAKE TO PASS THROUGH.
FWOOO


A GRAND SPEC-TACLE...
TA
TA
TA
TA
TA
TA
I SEE. SHE'S USING THE WATER FROM THE SPRING.
RUSTLE

FW
MY HORSE?
SH
WHUMP
SHK...

SORRY ABOUT THIS.
TUG
YOU COULDN'T EVADE ME...
...BECAUSE YOU WEREN'T WILLING TO CUT ME.
I'M GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR TAKING ME IN

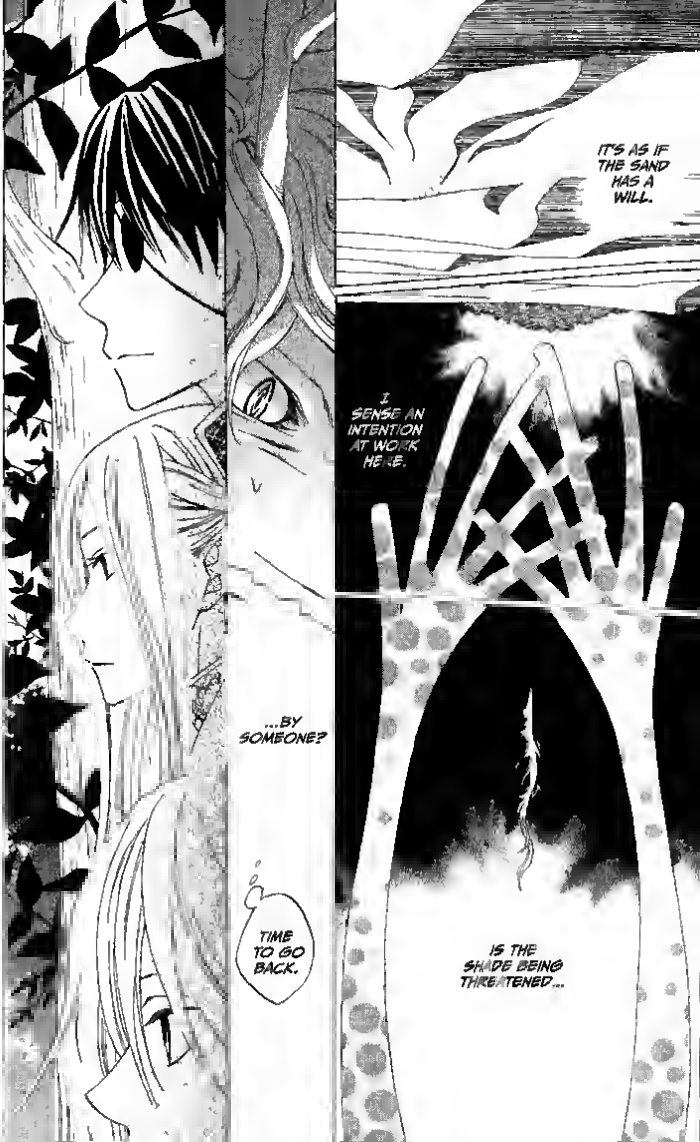
NOW, GIVE ME...
...THE ANSWER...
..MISS SWB.
D..
DO YOU HAVE A REASON FOR KEEPING IT SECRET?
PAT
OWW!!
PINCH
PINCH
PINCH
OW OW OW OW OW!
LUCIEN...
CRUNCH
YOU'VE HAD YOUR CHANCE AT "QBA."

IF YOU KNEW LUCIEN'S IDENTITY...
...AND YET DIDN'T RETURN HIM HOME...
...YOU'RE LIABLE FOR KIDNAPPING.
CHAK
NOW IT'S TIME...
...FOR INTERROGATION.
PERSONALLY, THAT CASE DOESN'T MATTER TO ME ONE WAY OR THE OTHER...
EXCUSE ME, "PUBLIC SERVANT"?
CHIK
SLIVER
KUMIAN...
...BUT HOW YOU CAME TO TAKE LUCIEN UNDER YOUR WING FIVE YEARS AGO...
...IS JUST ONE OF THE POINTS THAT I WANT YOU TO MAKE CLEAR.

BEING SILENT TO ME WILL...
WHAT'S THAT...
...EERIE WHISPERING?
SOUNDS LIKE A SPELL...
I THINK IT'S COMING FROM OVER BY THE SPRING.
STARE
I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH IT.

POP
...
...
SNIFF.
SMELL IN MY NOSE...
S...
SNIFF!
SNIFF!
WHAT IS THIS...?

IT'S NOT PASSING BY...
IT'S LIKE THE SANDSTORM IS SURROUNDING THE OASIS!!
THIS KIND OF SAND-STORM...
I FEAR THAT AT SOME POINT THE SPRING THAT PROVIDES WATER TO THE SHADE WILL BECOME CLOGGED WITH SAND.
...DOESN'T HAPPEN IN NATURE.


IT'S AS IF THE SAND HAS A WILL.
I SENSE AN INTENTION AT WORK HERE.
IS THE SHADE BEING THREATENED...
...BY SOMEONE?
TIME TO GO BACK.

FW
WHAT ARE THEY...
...UP TO?
MAKING A "W"...?
I'M NOT GOING TO ENTERTAIN ANY BANAL IDEAS
THERE'S NO SIGN THAT THE SANDSTORM MADE THEM BREAK OFF THEIR CHANTING...
IS WHAT THEY'RE SINGING SO IMPORTANT...
...THAT THEY'D RISK DOING IT IN THE MIDDLE OF A SANDSTORM?
Hmm...
IF THEY'RE PEOPLE OF THE SHADE...
...MAYBE THEY'RE PRAYING TO TRY TO WARD OFF THE STORM.

WHIZZZ
IF NOT THAT...
AND IF NOT THAT ...?
...THEN I DON'T KNOW.
THEIR ACTIONS ARE TOO SUSPICIOUS FOR ME TO GUESS WHAT THEY'RE DOING
FSST

YOU'RE PRETTY HOT-HEADED YOURSELF..
Always quick to draw your sword...
"EVIL RASCALS"?
THOUGH I DON'T CARE MUCH MORE FOR MY OWN PRESENT COMPANY
FIVE OF THEM..
..SURROUNDING US
CHFF...
HOWEVER, THEY SEEM TO HAVE AT LEAST ONE HOT-HEADED MEMBER AMONG THEIR RANKS...
...WHICH LEADS ME TO SUSPECT THAT THEY'RE A BAND OF EVIL RASCALS.
CRUNCH...
CRUNCH...

I COME TO CHECK OUT THE SPRING...
...AND FIND A BATTLE ALREADY IN PROGRESS!
GASP
THOSE PEOPLE...

...HAVE MALICE IN THEIR EYES!
GLARE
MAYBE THEY CALLED FORTH THE SANDSTORM...
...WITH SORCERY?
THAT WOULD TAKE TREMENDOUS POWER...
...BUT I HAVE TO STOP THEM!
WHOOSH

SQUEEZE
HUH!
SHAKUYA!
I BELIEVE THEY'RE TARGETING THE SHADE!
YOU MEAN, WITH THE SPELL THEY'RE RECITING...?
THIS SAND-STORM IS MANMADE!
MANMADE?!
I THINK SO!
SO IF I CAN INTERRUPT THEM, IT SHOULD MAKE THE STORM DISAPPEAR!
SQUEEZE
SQUEEZE

OKAY, STOP THAT MUTTERING ...
?
...AND HOLD YOUR BREATH!
I'M JUST SHORT OF CRUSHING THEM, BUT THEY'RE STILL HOLDING OUT!
THUMP THUMP
SQUEEE
OTHERWISE...
...YOU'RE GOING TO DROWN!
SPLASH
Transcendence
DASH
BLUB
BLUB
BLUB

TH
WHIZZZ
AK
FWO
OSH
LUCIEN'S TEACHER!
CLAK CLAK CLAK...
WOW! NOW THAT'S STRONG...!
Lucien's borrowing his teacher's sword at the moment.
And what's that trunk made of?

FWISH
SPLOOSH
Oops!
Forgot to take them out of the water...
KRUNCH
WHACK
I HATE THAT SOUND..
UNLIKE HER PUPIL, THAT TEACHER HAS NICE MOVES.

SSS...
KOFF
KOFF
KOFF
KOFF
KOFF
KOFF
KOFF
THEY CAN STILL SING...?
SPLOOSH!
...THIS METHOD SEEMS TO WORK.
BUT...

WH
THE SAND IS SLOWING DOWN...
I MERELY STRUCK YOU WITH THE BACK OF MY SWORD
WHEN YOU NEXT OPEN YOUR EYES, YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF IN AN INTERROGATION ROOM.
...THEY'RE RELATIVELY ADEPT SWORDSMEN
STILL...
CLANG

The spring in this spring is all right...
THE HEADMAN?!

CHIEF, IT'S DANGEROUS HERE!
GET BACK!

WHO...
...SAID THAT?

IT WAS A MAN'S VOICE...

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龍の花わずらい
Two Flowers for the Dragon
Episode 13

SLAP
KOFF
HRK!
THWAK
WHUMP
UNGH!
"CHIEF! IT'S DANGEROUS HERE!"
"GET BACK!"
...BUT...MY TEACHER'S A WOMAN!
HUH. WHAT A COINCI-DENCE.
I THOUGHT I HEARD IT FROM THE SAME DIRECTION, TOO...
THAT WAS A MAN'S VOICE...
...COMING OUT OF YOUR TEACHER'S THROAT, LUCIEN?
HUH? YOU DON'T SEEM HIM...IN THE MOUNTAINS?
WELL, NO, BUT...

Unless it's something that she'd want to hearing, that just distracts her!
He asks you on that.
What do you two always listen to...?
UMMM, LEMME SEE...
Recently, I've discovered...
...that playing drama CDs makes it hard for me to find sleep.
RUMBLE... RUMBLE...
...I don't need coffee, or an energy drink.
two assistants for her. (4)
continued on pg. 124

...SHE'S A WOMAN, I TELL YOU!
HOW MANY YEARS DO YOU THINK I SPENT WITH HER?
I THINK I WOULD KNOW!
SHE'S PLENTY SUSPICIOUS AS A WOMAN ALREADY...
AS A MAN PRETENDING TO BE A WOMAN, IT'S GETTING TOO COMPLICATED... SHE OR HE WILL HAVE TO BE PUT THROUGH THE WRINGER UNTIL I GET SOME STRAIGHT ANSWERS!
LUCIEN...
YOU'RE NEVER ACTUALLY...
...CONFIRMED YOUR TEACHER'S GENDER?
SHAKUYA, YOU TOO...?
I DOUBTED MY EARS, BUT...
MY TEACHER'S A MAN?
THAT'S RIDICULOUS.

DANCER! WE'RE INDEBTED TO YOU!
CHFF
FWI
SH
THE HEADMAN'S BODYGUARDS IF THEY'RE HERE, THEY'D BETTER DO THEIR JOBS!
BUT LET US TAKE OVER FROM HERE!
.. THAT VOICE BEFORE
...ON TOP OF THAT..
GULP
...I THINK...
.. I'VE HEARD...
CHUFF
CHUFF
SHRAK

YOU'RE GOING TO TRY TO ESCAPE AGAIN?!
WHIZZZ
RRRR
CHUFF
CHUFF
TA
SLASH
SLASH
!!
THOK

Run and you're going to be tomorrow's lunch, horsey.
WHINEEEE
I-I THOUGHT I WAS DEAD!!
THAT MAN WITH THE PATCH JUST EXUDES MENACE!
Who's going?
SPLOOOOSH
DRIP
DRIP
PAT PAT
FWOOOOSH

FOOOOSH
SPIN
SPIN
SPIN
...AND WHY IS THE DANCER WHO SAVED ME BEING TREATED LIKE THAT...?
WHAT IN THE WORLD HAPPENED HERE?
I'VE CALLED FOR MORE MEN TO TRANSPORT THESE PEOPLE...
...BUT WHO ARE THEY?
LADY SHAKUYA WILL FILL US IN IN A FEW MOMENTS.
SHAKUYA. I THINK MY TEACHER'S REALIZED HOW FEARSOME YOU CAN BE...
FRAC-SCHUTE
NO, NO, NO. THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M AFTER.
I WAS JUST WASHING YOUR MENTOR.
SPLASH

WASHING ..?
AH!
I'm glad you're getting on my nerves...but do you even know to wear one?
You're lucky. That's not something you're sort of dating over.
I WANTED TO SEE THIS PERSON'S TRUE FACE
STARE...
.....

I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU DID IT..
...BUT THE BRAND OF EXILE THAT SHOULD BE ON YOUR FOREHEAD...
..HAS BEEN WIPED CLEAN AWAY.
...FATHER...?
Hhhhh...

I DIDN'T THINK THERE WOULD BE A PROBLEM IF I JUST DANCED AT THE BANQUET...
KA-CHA...
...BUT I WAS WRONG.
ALL I WANTED...
...WAS TO SEE MY DAUGHTER'S FACE
I...
I KEEP HEARING THINGS
Are you all right?
FATHER?!?
お父様!!?
THUMP
ズン
LORD HAKURAI?!

Washing

When the washing machine is full, I pour in baking soda to try to dispel any odors. After the clothes are washed, they come out smelling pleasant and it's a smell that makes me feel nostalgic, but I haven't been able to remember where or when I smelled it before. It's a scent that makes me feel as if all is well... The face soap that I use these days also makes me feel nostalgic and I have a certain memory associated with it. It reminds me of the plastic bag I used to always take to the pool with me when I was in elementary school, though I know the bag back then had a more "plastic-y" smell to it. No, there's something else, something closer to the actual smell of the soap...but what is it? What is it?! This kind of thing happens to me on a fairly regular basis.

I AM INDEED...

...HAKURAI...

...SHAKUYA'S FATHER.

TAK

FWUMP

TAP TAP
SIN
FOOD
POP!
...WHAT'S WRONG?
FATHER ...
WHAT DOES IT EVEN MEAN WHEN YOUR DAD'S EXTRA-MARITAL LOVER IS HIMSELF?!
WHAT THE HELL DID YOU GET A DIVORCE FOR?! YOU OWE ME SOME BIG TIME EXPLAINING, OLD MAN!
SO NOW YOU'RE A MAN, TEACH?! YOU KNOW HOW CONFUSING THAT IS?!
AND IT MEANS THAT FOR FIVE FRIGGIN' YEARS, YOU WERE TOYIN' WITH MY LIFE!
BECOME JUVENILE DELIN QUENTS

IF YOU THINK A BIG DOSE OF CALCIUM IS GONNA SOLVE EVERYTHING, YOU'RE SORELY MISTAKEN!
TEACHER!!
LITTLE FISH
YES.
SHAKUYA
WHAT BOTH OF YOU SAY IS ESSENTIALLY CORRECT
LUCIEN.
THERE IS A DEEP EXPLANATION TO THIS
TO BEGIN WITH, I DID NOT DON A WOMAN'S GARB OUT OF ANY INHERENT INTEREST..
...ALTHOUGH I MUST ADMIT THAT IT GREW ON ME VERY QUICKLY.
SIGH
In fact, I don't know if I can give it up!

HE APPEARED ALL OF A SUDDEN...
AH!
BUT BEFORE WE CONTINUE WITH FAMILY TALK.
.. YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO REPORT TO THE LEADER OF THE SHADE, DON'T YOU, SHAKUYA?
LUCIEN
...AND IN AN UNFATHOMABLE GUISE...
... BUT MY FATHER'S STILL MY FATHER
Why that exact voice again...
... BUT IT WAS NEVER MY INTENTION TO "TOY" WITH FIVE YEARS OF YOUR LIFE.
...
I COULDN'T SPEAK TO YOU ALL THAT TIME...
.. BECAUSE DOING SO WOULD'VE REVEALED MYSELF AS A MAN
I AM DEEPLY SORRY FOR BETRAYING YOUR TRUST..
YOU THINK HE WOULD'VE NOTICED IN ALL THAT TIME...
Even if his life was being toyed with, he has no right to complain!
KACHING

BUT HIS FOREHEAD IS UNBLEMISHED...
OF COURSE, THE MARK IT LEAVES CAN'T BE EASILY ERASED.
DOCTORS, MEDICINE ...?
UNLESS EVERYTHING WORKED OUT JUST SO, IT WOULDN'T HEAL THAT WELL.
THE "BRAND OF BANISHMENT"...
...ISN'T A METAPHOR...
...BUT A SEVERE PUNISHMENT THAT INVOLVES PRESSING ACTUAL RED-HOT IRON AGAINST THE FOREHEAD
...WHAT?! DON'T LOOK AT ME!
LUCIEN, TOO... THE FIRST THING HE REMEMBERS FIVE YEARS AGO WAS BEING COVERED IN BLOOD...
...BUT THERE'S NOT A SINGLE SCAR ON HIM.
WELL, DON'T?
NOTHING.
I WAS JUST FEELING SORRY FOR YOU.

IT SEEMS THAT A CAREFUL INTERROGATION OF THE PRISONERS IS NECESSARY
Now, I'm sorry that the clothes you lent me are in tatters.
YOU SAY THE SANDSTORM WAS MANMADE—?!
UNBELIEVABLE! IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE..?
..ESPECIALLY FROM MY POINT-OF-VIEW..
THESE TWO DISPARATE THINGS...
..MAY BE SEEN TO HAVE A CONNECTION...
..TO LEARN HOW THEY DID IT.
I BELIEVE THEY WERE STRONGLY DEDICATED TO EXECUTING THEIR PLAN.
UNDERSTOOD
CHIEF!
WE'VE PREPARED TWO COVERED COACHES.
ONE WILL BE USED TO CONVEY THESE MASKED MISCREANTS TO LOCKUP.
I MUST APOLOGIZE FOR KEEPING YOU IN PROXIMITY TO THOSE CRIMINALS.
..BUT PLEASE USE THE OTHER COACH TO RETURN, LADY SHAKUYA.
"Oh, well..."
THERE IS NO FOOTPATH THAT WOULD TAKE YOU FROM HERE TO YOUR QUARTERS.

RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
WHAT IS THIS "DEEP EXPLANATION"...
...YOU MENTIONED, FATHER?
WHAT DO YOU SURMISE IT MIGHT BE, SHAKUYA?
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE

THUMP THUMP
S...
SO IT DOESN'T INVOLVE HAVING AN AFFAIR, RIGHT...?
REALLY?
NO WONDER MOTHER WAS RETICENT ABOUT THE SUBJECT.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR "SIMPLE CAMOUFLAGE" PUT ME THROUGH...?
YOUR MOTHER AND I PUT ON AN ACT
...SO THAT I COULD LEAVE THE OASIS AND MOVE ABOUT FREELY.
EVERY-THING RELATED TO THE DIVORCE...
...WAS MERE CAMOU-FLAGE...
...
...
...
BUT..
Whew...
I SUPPOSE IT'S BETTER THAN WHAT I WAS LED TO BELIEVE.

I DIDN'T WANT TO HURT YOU IF I COULD HELP IT...
BUT I DECIDED THAT IT WAS UNAVOIDABLE.
THE DEEP EXPLANATION, THOUGH, LIES IN A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT AREA.
BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY THAT IT HAS NOTHING TO DO...
...WITH ANYTHING YOU'VE EVER KNOWN IN YOUR LIFE
HUGH
SHAKUYA
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED SINCE FIVE YEARS AGO.
YOU'RE STILL HONEST AND STRAIGHT-FORWARD. WHICH I'VE ALWAYS LOVED ABOUT YOU.
BUT WHEN IT COMES TO THE BURDEN YOU HAVE TO BEAR,
...YOU'RE HONEST TO A FAULT OPEN YOUR EYES TO THAT
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE

WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO GROW OUT OF BEING THE FELLOW WHO IS ONLY "KIND"?
AS FOR YOU, LUCIEN...
I don't really understand, but...
"You shouldn't take that tone with her."
MY MASTER.
RATTLE RATTLE RATTLE RATTLE
THIS FULLY-EXPOSED SUSPICIOUS CHARACTER IS DOMINANT OVER THESE TWO?
...
...
...
DO YOU HAVE HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR HIM? MAYBE HOPE THAT HE'LL BECOME LADY SHAKUYA'S LIFE PARTNER?
RATTLE
SAY WHAT YOU LIKE.
...BUT YOU TAUGHT THAT "FELLOW WHO IS ONLY KIND" FOR FIVE YEARS WITHOUT RETURNING HIM TO THE OASIS.
RATTLE

AS A FELLOW FIANCÉ, I DON'T FIND THIS AMUSING..
BUT PERHAPS YOU DIDN'T JUST "FIND" LUCIEN IN THE DESERT
PERHAPS THERE WAS A PLAN FROM THE BEGINNING TO TRAIN HIM. MAKE HIM A MORE VIABLE SUITOR?
..INDEED.
IT APPEARS...
KUWAN, YOU HAVE THE WRONG IDEA.
IT HAPPENED RIGHT AFTER A SANDSTORM.
WHEN I TOOK IN THE BOY WHO WAS COVERED IN BLOOD AND SAW HIS FACE, YES, THEN I RECOGNIZED HIM.
BUT HE WASN'T WOUNDED ..
SO YOU HEARD THAT FROM LUCIEN, DID YOU?
THAT'S CORRECT.
IT'S THE MOST ENIGMATIC MYSTERY.

YWAAAA!
...THAT LORD HAKURAI IS NOT IN THE MOOD...
...TO DIVULGE HIS "DEEP EXPLANATION" HERE AND NOW.
STOP THE WAGON! I'LL GO BACK THERE AND DEAL WITH IT
YES, SIR.
ONE OF THE PRISONERS BIT OFF HIS TONGUE IN A BID TO COMMIT SUICIDE!
CAN THE CHIEF TRANSFER TO THIS WAGON?
PERMISSION GRANTED
WE'LL STOP FOR A MOMENT AS WELL.
RATTLE
WHAT'S WRONG?!
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE

GAG THE REST OF THEM SO THEY DON'T ATTEMPT THE SAME THING.
YES, SIR.
OOH., HE NEEDS TO BE TAKEN TO A DOCTOR, FAST.
WAKE UP, YOU!
OPEN YOUR MOUTH.

RALLE
CREAK

TH
AK
AM I THAT OLD, THAT YOU TREAT ME LIKE A NOBLE-WOM...
...AN?
Uhhh...
BE CAREFUL GETTING DOWN.
CHIEF...

RUSTLE
CHIEF?!
GUESS HE WASN'T TRYING TO DIE.
JUST SHOWING RESISTANCE.
SO WE HAVEN'T CONQUERED THEIR WILLS AFTER ALL...
ARE THEY PANICKING, NOW THAT THEIR SANDSTORM'S FAILED?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE OTHER WAGON, BUT THERE ARE NINE MASKED MEN ALL TOLD.
TA
LADY SHAKUYA, STAY HERE.
AH... OKAY.
I THINK WE'D BETTER ADD OUR NUMBERS TO THE OTHER SIDE
I'M WITH YOU
LIKE A TEACHER'S PET.

I DON'T SUPPOSE I COULD CONTROL ENOUGH WATER FROM HERE TO BLOW THAT WAGON AWAY..
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
BESIDES, SINCE I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE SITUATION IS INSIDE THE WAGON, I DON'T WANT TO ACT RASHLY AND POSSIBLY HARM THE GUARDS.
ALL RIGHT! CONCENTRATE!
CH
AK!!
FWISH

SHAKUYA!
WATCH OUT!
LADY SHAKUYA!
THE ENEMY IS GOOD.
AS I SWEEP AWAY A BROKEN SWORD ANOTHER STRIKES
...CAN'T SHE HEAR US?

...AND I KNOW HE WON'T LISTEN IF I TELL HIM TO OVERLOOK THE EASIEST TARGET ON THE BATTLEFIELD.

SHUK!

...LADY SHAKUYA.
..THIS BLADE...
JUST LIKE...
SLASH
KAIT
FWIT

SPLISH
WOBBLE...

EH...?
WAIT
NO...
KUWAN...!

Transcendence

CREDITS:

TRANSLATOR:

CLEANER:
Rose

TYPESETTER:

PROOFREADER:

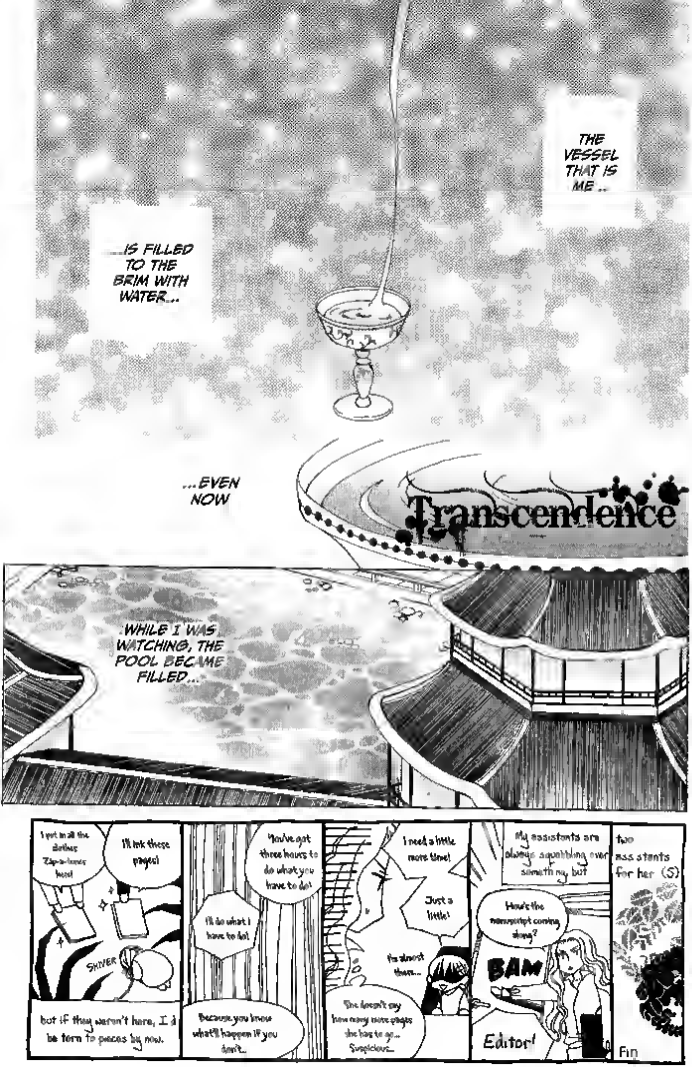
QUALITYCHECKER:
Nancy

SCANPROVIDER:
XYE

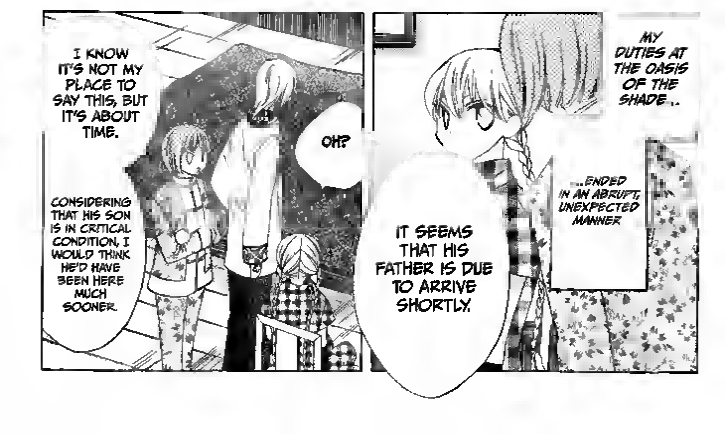
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?!
Why are you covered in blood?
PANT
PANT
DID I MAKE IT?
WELL, I HEARD TRANSCENDENCE IS RECRUITING SO I CAME AS FAST AS POSSIBLE
I though the positions might be taken soon
AS FOR THE BLOOD... I TRIPPED...
A couple of times
TRANSCENDENCESCANS@GMAIL.COM
OUR-TRANSCENDENCE.COM
TO apply
But, that's not important.
Transcendence IS CURRENTLY IN NEED OF
- Editors
- Korean & Chinese translators
- Quality checkers

Episode 14
龍の花わずらい
Two Flowers for the Dragon

Is Kuwon okay? was the question that demanded to be answered in this episode, so I had Shakuya being unusually meek here


THE VESSEL THAT IS ME...
...IS FILLED TO THE BRIM WITH WATER...
...EVEN NOW
Transcendence
WHILE I WAS WATCHING, THE POOL BECAME FILLED...
I got in all the clothes! Zip-a-loons here!
I'll ink these pages!
SKINER
but if they weren't here, I'd be torn to pieces by now.
You've got three hours to do what you have to do!
I'll do what I have to do!
Because you know what'll happen if you don't...
I need a little more time!
Just a little!
I'm almost there...
She doesn't say how many more pages she has to go... Suspicious...
My assistants are always squabbling over sumeth ng, but
How's the manuscript coming along?
BAM
Editor!
two ass stants for her (S)
Fin

SHAKUYA...
HOW'S KUWAN?
HE HASN'T REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS YET.
...AND I THINK IT THREATENS TO OVERFLOW.


I KNOW IT'S NOT MY PLACE TO SAY THIS, BUT IT'S ABOUT TIME.
OH?
CONSIDERING THAT HIS SON IS IN CRITICAL CONDITION, I WOULD THINK HE'D HAVE BEEN HERE MUCH SOONER.
IT SEEMS THAT HIS FATHER IS DUE TO ARRIVE SHORTLY.
MY DUTIES AT THE OASIS OF THE SHADE...
...ENDED IN AN ABRUPT, UNEXPECTED MANNER

...OVER AND OVER...
...WHAT HAPPENED AT THE SHADE.
I FEEL SORRY FOR KUWAN!
THREE DAYS! WE'VE BEEN HOME FOR THREE DAYS NOW!
THE CHIEF OF POLICE PROBABLY HAS PRESSING MATTERS TO ATTEND TO.
WELL, THERE'S NO REASON TO TAKE IT OUT ON ME.
THWAP
SHAKUYA...
I'VE BEEN THESE PAST THREE DAYS..
...AT KUWAN'S SIDE...
...RECALLING...
YOU SHOULD GET SOME REST.

IT WAS A MORTAL WOUND.
KUWAN...!
YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT!
GET INSIDE THE WAGON...
THE CHIEF, WITH HIS SLIGHT INJURY, FAINTS?!
UNNN...
FWAP
SQUEEZE

AHHH...
HUFF
THIS WOUND ...
...IS NOTHING TO SNEEZE AT.
.....
I.
I'LL STOP THE BLEEDING FIRST..
Transcendence
I'M IN A COMPLICATED STATE OF MIND.
I MESSED UP...
...OR MAYBE IT WAS UN-AVOIDABLE.

HUFF
JUST STAY AWAKE...
HUFF
HUFF...
IF THESE ARE MY LAST MOMENTS...
THE BLEEDING...
...WON'T STOP...
HUFF...
KUWAN!

THIS SURPRISES ME
AS WELL, LADY SHAKUYA.
I NEVER THOUGHT
I COULD EXPOSE MYSELF TO AN ENEMY'S BLADE WITHOUT HESITATION
BUT I DID IT FOR YOU
BECAUSE WE'RE ARRANGED TO BE MARRIED
FUR
THIS WILL BE THE FIRST TIME I'VE ASKED, BUT
HOW DO YOU SEE ME, KUWAN?
WAIT
DON'T ANSWER RIGHT NOW.
THIS ISN'T THE TIME TO TALK ABOUT IT.
YOU CAN GIVE ME AN ANSWER. YES, SOME YEARS FROM NOW. WHEN WE'RE SITTING ON THE VERANDA ON A WARM AUTUMN DAY.
THAT'S FINE, IF I STILL HAVE TIME..

KUWAN.
IT'S COMPLI-CATED...
THERE'S LITTLE HOPE OF THAT.
BUT ...LET'S BE HONEST.
BUT I'M AT PEACE WITH THIS.
I DON'T THINK...
...IT'S A MISTAKE. MY HEART..
...FEELS LIKE IT'S ON FIRE...AND I KEEP WAITING...TO BE PUNISHED FOR IT...
FOR ALWAYS...
...PUNISHED FOR WHAT?

...WANTING TO DO THIS.
Transcendence
LUCIEN!

BLOOD...
...ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I'LL LEAVE THE REST TO YOU
GASP!
BEHIND YOU!
CLANG!
THEN FINISH THEM OFF!
COUNT ON IT
I MEAN
...I'M FINE.
PARDON THE LAPSE.
CREAK
SHAKUYA...

FATHER...
GOOD TIMING
THE CHIEF...
...HAS FAINTED, YES?
...
KUWAN...
I'VE DECIDED...
...TO HEAL YOU.

HOW...?
SHAKUYA
I HAD THOUGHT I WOULDN'T REVEAL THIS TO YOU AT THE PRESENT TIME...
RUSTLE
...BUT I'LL HAVE TO REVISE MY THINKING.
I HAVE NO IDEA WHY YOU'RE SHOWING THAT TO US NOW, OF ALL TIMES...
I HID THIS SECRETED AGAINST THE LEFT SIDE OF MY CHEST.
I will eat you...
RUSTLE...
THE HEART OF THE MATTER IS THE RIGHT SIDE...

WHAT...?
A LUMP?!
YOU NEVER HAD THAT WHEN I WAS GROWING UP
EVER SINCE I STARTED LOOKING AFTER THIS, I HAVE KNOWN NO ILLNESS
SQUEAK
KUWAN, I'M BORROWING YOUR SWORD.
IT'S KEPT MY SKIN AND MY HAIR SO FAIR...
...THAT NO ONE HAS SUSPECTED ME OF BEING A MAN THESE FIVE YEARS.
SHK
LIKEWISE THE SOLUTION TO THE MYSTERY OF THE DISAPPEARING BRAND...

..LIES IN THIS..
...DRAGON ORB.
THUMP...

FOO
WHY IS MY BLOOD RACING ALL OF A SUDDEN..?
STRICTLY SPEAKING, ONLY A PURE DRAGON IS BORN WITH ONE OF THESE
IT'S CRYSTAL, COMPOSED OF RARIFIED LIFE ENERGY
YOU SAY DRAGON ORBS?
THUMP...
WHAT IS THIS..?
THE EXCEEDINGLY RARE DRAGON ORBS ARE WRAPPED IN WILD RUMORS AND LEGEND, ONE OF WHICH IS THAT THEY BEQUEATH ETERNAL YOUTH
BLUP

MY POWER IS RAGING...
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
WHILE I CLOSE KUWAN'S WOUND...
...KEEP THAT ENERGY UNDER CONTROL, SHAKUYA.
AH...
OTHERWISE, THE SHADE WILL BE DELUGED.
KUWAN, I NEED TO PLACE THIS ON THE WOUND
YES.
HOWEVER...
IN OTHER WORDS..
HUFF
...THAT'S LADY SHAKUYA'S...

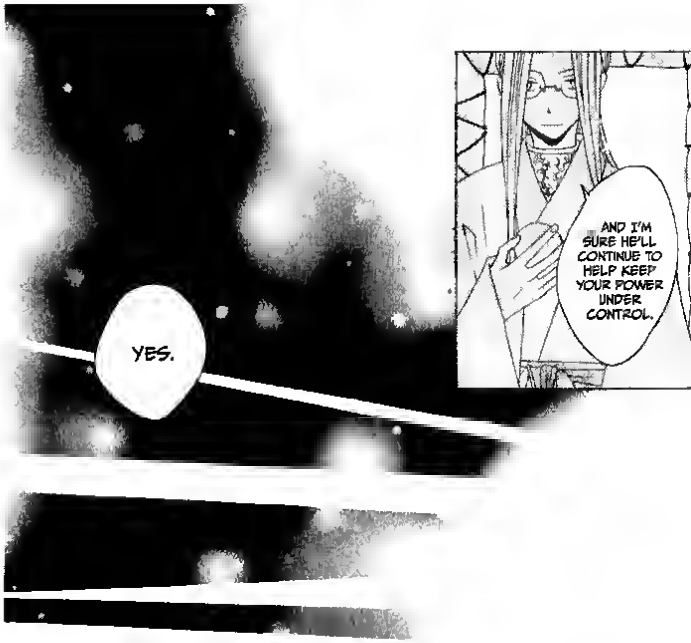
...THE FACT THAT SHAKUYA WAS BORN WITH A DRAGON ORB IS AN ALL-IMPORTANT SECRET AT THE DRAGON OASIS.
HER DRAGON GENES ARE EXTREMELY POWERFUL, A THROWBACK TO HER ANCIENT ANCESTORS.
EVEN WHEN THE WELLSPRING OF HER POWER, THE DRAGON ORB, WAS TAKEN AWAY, SHE REMAINED CLOSER TO A DRAGON THAN ANYONE ELSE IN THE CLAN.

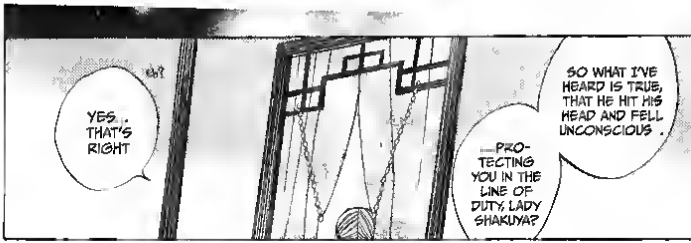
BLUP
BLUP
THUMP
BLUP
THUMP
THUMP
EXCESSIVE POWER MAY EVEN BECOME THE SEED OF DISCORD.
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?!
THAT THIS IS 100% OF MY POWER?!
AND IF SHAKUYA IS A "VESSEL" THAT CAN'T CONTAIN ALL OF THAT POWER...
THE VERY IDEA INVITES TREPIDATION.
AR
RO

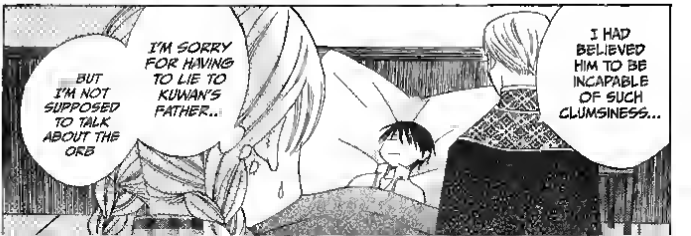
AH!
KN
THUMP
FEELS LIKE...
..IT'S GOING TO WASH ME AWAY..
SQUEEZE
THAT'S WHY..

...RIGHT, LADY SHAKUYA?
...THE GUY STANDING NEXT TO YOU...
...KEEPS IT IN CHECK...
CALM...
CALM...
THUMP
GASP
LURCH
SPLASH
THUMP

KUWAN..?
HE'S FALLEN ASLEEP.
THE ORB HEALED HIS WOUND...OR, MORE ACCURATELY, FORCIBLY BOOSTED HIS BODY'S OWN POWER OF RECOVERY.
AS A RESULT, HE'S EXTREMELY FATIGUED.
THEN IT'S NOT ALMIGHTY...
NO, IT'S NOT
I BELIEVE IT'S STILL A LITTLE TOO EARLY TO TURN THE ORB OVER TO YOU.
IT'S ENOUGH THAT IT WAS USED TO SAVE KUWAN THIS TIME..
...ALL RIGHT.

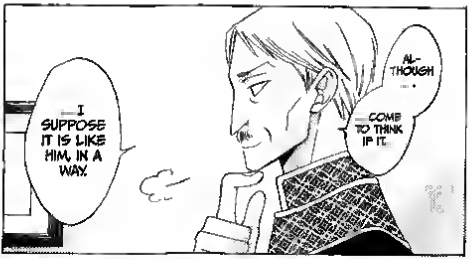

AND I'M SURE HE'LL CONTINUE TO HELP KEEP YOUR POWER UNDER CONTROL.
YES.


SO WHAT I'VE HEARD IS TRUE, THAT HE HIT HIS HEAD AND FELL UNCONSCIOUS .
—PROTECTING YOU IN THE LINE OF DUTY, LADY SHAKUYA?
Uh?
YES. . THAT'S RIGHT


I HAD BELIEVED HIM TO BE INCAPABLE OF SUCH CLUMSINESS...
I'M SORRY FOR HAVING TO LIE TO KUWAN'S FATHER..
—BUT I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO TALK ABOUT THE ORB

Soothing

I thought about trying bath salts and all kinds of stuff to be able to relax, but most of it's so expensive that in the end I didn't bother, except for something that was like Kneipp. I like the scent of chamomile. The same smell comes from the hot water in a small bath that's used to heat up the patient's "ready area" at a neighborhood bonesetter. The difference is, you can't sprawl out at the bonesetter's, although I'm sure that small bath is good for you.



AN ORPHAN WHO SOMEHOW WOUND UP AT THIS OASIS..
INDEED KUWAN WAS ABOUT 12 AT THE TIME..
I'VE JUST HEARD VAGUE RUMORS
SOMETHING ABOUT LOSING IT WHILE TRYING TO HELP YOU MANY YEARS AGO ?

BEING IN THE POLICE FORCE AUTOMATICALLY EARNS ONE ENMITY FROM CERTAIN SECTORS...
AND SO IT WAS THAT ONE NIGHT WHILE TRAVELING, I WAS SET UPON BY A GROUP OF THUGS
KUWAN, WHO HAPPENED TO BE IN THE AREA, CAME TO MY AID.
AND SOON AFTER THAT, YOU ADOPTED HIM...
NOD
THE EYE THAT HE LOST WAS PROOF OF HIS COURAGE
WHAT HAPPENED THIS TIME MUST BE A SIMILAR CASE, I TAKE IT?
AH...
WELL
HOW CAN I PUT IT?
ACTUALLY MY YOUNGEST SON (THREE YEARS OLD) HAS THE MEASLES...
THE MEA-SLES?!
YES... BUT I'M SURPRISED YOU DIDN'T RUSH TO GET HERE SOONER..
I HAD FAITH IN KUWAN
WELL, CERTAINLY, IT SEEMS THAT HE'S GOING TO WAKE UP WHEN HIS BODY'S ALL RESTED, BUT...
THERE, YOU SEE?
HE'S A STRONG MAN

CREAK
I WONDER IF HE'S BOTHERED BY THE INEQUALITY
BUT COMING HERE HAS PUT MY MIND AT EASE
KA-CHA!
TO THE WORLD, YOU SEEM LIKE A GOOD FATHER, BUT TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AND IT'S OBVIOUS YOU FOLLOW A CERTAIN PRIORITY.
I MEAN, YOU HAVE A SON WHO'S THE SAME AGE AS KUWAN...
...BUT YOU ONLY USE THE ADOPTED ONE AS A PAWN IN A POLITICAL MARRIAGE.
AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT LUPINA WAS SAYING.
FWAP!
THUD
That would be cute and he simply doesn't have it...
YOU HAVE A POINT.
ME, I DON'T THINK KUWAN LOOKS LIKE HE'S ANGLING TO GET MORE LOVE FROM HIS ADOPTED DAD.
A LOT IS GOING ON...
..AT THE DRAGON SHRINE.

THE ONLY THING I'M WELL AWARE OF IS MY OWN SMALLNESS.
SO IT SEEMS.
I'VE BEEN TOLD TO DRINK IT ALL UP.
THE ORB WAS USED ON YOU, TOO, WASN'T IT, LUCIEN...
—FIVE YEARS AGO?
THOUGH I DON'T REMEMBER IT...
I don't even know where I was injured.
YOU WOULD DRAW A MOUSTACHE ON HIS FACE OR SOMETHING.
GO AHEAD, GET SOME REST. I'LL WATCH KUWAN IN THE MEANTIME.
No way
IS THAT WHAT YOU SEE ME DOING IN YOUR DREAM?
THERE'S STILL A LOT I DON'T UNDERSTA...
SHAKUYA, DON'T SLEEP STANDING UP.
I thought only shonen manga could do that...
WELL, IF YOU DON'T TRUST ME, YOU DON'T TRUST ME.
GUESS THE ONLY THING FOR ME TO DO...

THANK YOU. THAT WOKE ME UP.
BLINK
...IS FORGET ABOUT KUWAN AND WATCH YOU.
Starting now!
Transcendence
BUT...
WHILE I WAS SLEEPING ...
...I TRIED TO THINK OF SOMETHING YOU HAVE THAT I'M ENVIOUS OF IN RETURN...
...BUT SORRY I COULDN'T COME UP WITH ANYTHING.
...TO BE HONEST, I'M ENVIOUS OF HIM
AHA!
I SUSPECTED AS MUCH.

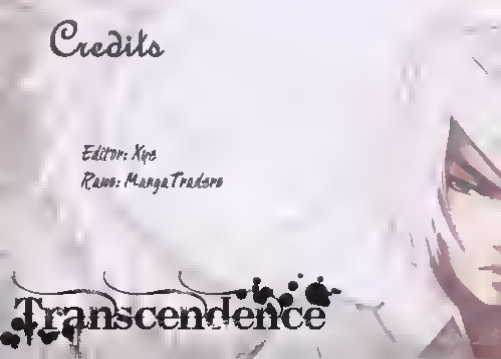
...THAT'S ALL RIGHT.
I'M ALL RIGHT.

Episode 14: The End

Credits

Editor: Xyc

Raws: MangaTraders



Wanted

Dead or Alive

Translators/Editors/Quality Checkers

Rewards:

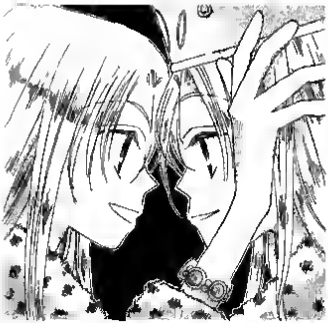
Alive: Cookies

Dead: Crumbs

[illegible] email.com

Part of the [illegible] project at Transcendence

The one on the left is a girl and...well, I don't want to give away the plot. This is my third published story since my debut and it's done-in-one.



PRINCESS ...
A LETTER HAS COME.
THE SENDER HAS HEARD A RUMOR ABOUT YOU..
...AND HAS WRITTEN TO THE EFFECT OF, "I'M COMING TO STEAL AWAY THE BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS."
...IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO GO TO WORK, SHERLOCK.
PLOP
HMM... WELL, FOR STARTERS...
WHAT SHALL BE DONE ABOUT IT?
.. AND I'M HER LOOKALIKE.
WHEN WE CATCH HIM, I THINK WE'LL HAVE HIM STUFFED AND SENT TO A MUSEUM. HAHAHA!
SHE'S THIS COUNTRY'S PRINCESS ..
BUT IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE..
... THERE'S A FOOL OUT THERE WHO WOULD TARGET ONE OF THIS COUNTRY'S LEADING FIGURES BASED ON A FAIRY TALE.

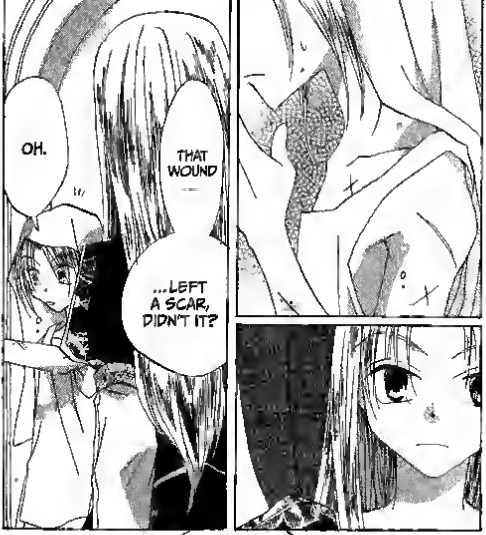
I'M THE PRINCESS' BODY DOUBLE...
...EVEN THOUGH I'M A MAN.
ダブルクラウン
DOUBLE CROWN

IT'S SAID THAT THERE ARE THREE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD WHO HAVE THE SAME FACE AS YOU...
AND I'M LUCKY ENOUGH TO HAVE FOUND ONE OF THEM IN MY KINGDOM.
IT'S FUNNY HOW WE LOOK LIKE MIRROR DUPLICATES, EVEN THOUGH WE'RE OPPOSITE GENDERS!
AND NOT ONLY THAT...
...OUR PERSONALITIES ARE SO DIFFERENT!
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?
...JUST THAT I'M UNABLE TO SMILE CRUELLY ♡ LIKE YOU.
I CAN'T WAIT FOR THE PREY TO BRAZENLY BURST IN AND TRY TO SWEEP "ME" AWAY, CAN YOU, SHERLOCK?
NO, I CAN'T WAIT.
WE HAVE THE SAME FACE...
...AND THE FACT THAT I'M A MALE IS COMPENSATED FOR BY MY PHYSICAL STRENGTH, SO I WAS DEEMED A PERFECT CHOICE.
...FOR THIS DUTY, WHICH WAS ASSIGNED TO ME THREE YEARS AGO.
IT'S BEEN A QUICK THREE YEARS AND DURING THIS TIME, I'VE MADE ONLY ONE MISTAKE.

IT'S LIKE WEARING MATCHING OUTFITS.
RATHER THAN BE SELF-CONSCIOUS ABOUT IT, IT'S THE SAME DAY IN AND DAY OUT, SO I'M ACCUSTOMED TO IT.
ANYWAY, I KNOW THE PRINCESS ISN'T WITHIN MY REACH.
NEVERTHELESS...
...AS A MAN, I WANT TO PROTECT HER.
GLITTER
I'VE FALLEN IN LOVE...
...WITH THIS PRINCESS, WHO'S AT LEAST A HUNDRED TIMES STRONGER THAN ME.
YES WE HAVE THE SAME FACE BUT I SWEAR I'M NOT A NARCISSIST

PRINCESS!
WHAT SHOULD I DO FIRST?!
TAKE A BATH.
SPLISH.
This is a man...?
WAAA! NO PEEKING! I CALL SEXUAL HARASSMENT!
FSSH.
POP
POLISH UP THAT BEAUTIFUL SKIN!
HAVE YOU ALREADY DECIDED ON THE KIDNAPPER'S PUNISHMENT?
DRIP
That's all wet...
WE'LL CAPTURE HIM ALIVE AND THEN HAVE HIM WORK AS HARD AS A CARRIAGE HORSE FOR THIS COUNTRY.
DON'T DO ANYTHING TOO DANGEROUS.

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO GETS ALL THE DANGER.
I DON'T TAKE RISKS MYSELF, SO DON'T WORRY.
I SEE.
YOU MAKE ALL OF MY PUBLIC APPEARANCES FOR ME.
.. WHILE I SIT HERE IN THE LAP OF LUXURY BUT BELIEVE IT OR NOT, IT'S HARD ON ME I FEEL LIKE I'M UNDER HOUSE ARREST
IT'S BECAUSE I'M AN ONLY CHILD...
I BET THINGS WOULD BE DIFFERENT IF THERE WERE AN ILLEGITIMATE ROYAL CHILD OUT THERE SOMEWHERE
PRINCESS..
FSSSH
PLEASE DON'T SAY THINGS THAT COULD SPARK RUMORS.
HMM..
WHAT?
EVEN YOU LOOK LIKE A REAL MAN WHEN YOU COME OUT OF THE BATH... BARELY...
FOR THE RECORD, I AM A NORMAL MALE.
Even though I wear skirts all the time...



OH, I'M NOT BOTHERED
NO, I WAS JUST THINKING HOW INTERESTING IT IS...
THAT YOU GOT SO MANY SCARS IN MY STEAD
I thought that's what you

6

Double Crown

I suck at drawing, don't I ?
And yet, I remember being confident at the time I was working on the manuscript for this. Subjectivity is scary. Recently when I feel that something's interesting, I try to get it down on paper without thinking too much about it in order to preserve a sense of freshness. Otherwise, I have the tendency to think about morals or what other people might think when they eventually see the art and this makes me stiffen up.
Now, when I reread my older stories, I get the impression that I wasn't stiff at all, but just had a good time drawing. I wonder where this insecurity gap between then and now came from?

ULP
...I'VE GOT A GOOD MEMORY
YOU REMEMBER WHERE I GOT EACH OF MY SCARS...?
MM...
I THOUGHT THIS ONE WOULD FADE AWAY, BUT THAT'S LEFT A SCAR, TOO, HUH?
...DOESN'T HAVE A SCAR...
...BUT IT'S THE MOST PAINFUL WOUND I HAVE.
WHAT ELSE?
OH. THIS SPOT..
THAT'S COMMEND-ABLE...
OKAY, HOW ABOUT THIS ONE?
YOU GOT THAT ON YOUR FIRST OUTING AS "ME."
YOU HAD SHORT HAIR AT THE TIME, SO YOU HAD TO WEAR A WIG.
THEN WHAT ABOUT THIS?
Yeah we...

SWISH!
IT HAPPENED THREE YEARS AGO, WHEN WE WERE BOTH 11.
I DON'T CARE IF YOU'RE THE PRINCESS!
I'M SICK OF THIS!!
I REFUSE TO BE YOUR DOUBLE ANYMORE!!
WHY DO I HAVE TO BE HURT FOR THE SAKE OF SOMEBODY I DON'T EVEN KNOW EVERY TIME I GO OUT IN PUBLIC?!
ARE YOU REALLY ALL THAT IMPORTANT?!
MY FAMILY MAY HAVE VOLUNTEERED ME FOR THIS, BUT I NEVER AGREED TO BE PROFESSIONAL BAIT!!
...WHAT'S YOUR NAME AGAIN? SHERLOCK?
FWIP
IF YOU FEEL THAT YOU'RE NOT CUT OUT FOR THIS WORK, THEN THERE'S NOTHING FOR IT.
DON'T PATRONIZE ME.
WHAT YOU SAY MAKES SENSE
...UNLESS YOU REALLY MEAN IT AND I CAN QUIT!
I'M SURE MY FATHER WOULDN'T ALLOW THAT.
ALL RIGHT, THEN...
LET'S CHANGE ROLES.
TODAY, I'LL GO OUT IN PUBLIC AS THE "DOUBLE"...
...AND YOU STAY IN AS THE "PRINCESS"

AND SO, THAT EVENING...
BUZZ
...THE PRINCESS WAS ATTACKED BY AN ASSASSIN AT A BALL.
HELP IS ON THE WAY!
I WANT TO SET YOU FREE, BUT RIGHT NOW THERE'S NO TIME...
SO HURRY UP AND GET DRESSED, "PRINCESS"!
EH...?
PRINCESS!!
SHE DIDN'T SAY A WORD OF COMPLAINT...
..BUT HER BANDAGES MADE ME CRINGE.
I WASN'T AT ALL PLEASED THAT I HAD BEEN SAFELY COOPED UP IN HERE THAT EVENING.
SO DO YOU HAVE EVERYTHING READY FOR YOUR ESCAPE?
Where did my luggage go?
...NO, NOT QUITE.

AREN'T YOU GOING TO RUN AWAY?
I DUNNO YET!
YOU HAVE...
...A NEW SCAR THERE.
AFTER THAT, I SOMEHOW FELL BACK INTO THE ROUTINE FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS...
?
MM? YEAH
BUT IT CAN BE COVERED UP WITH MAKEUP
OR I COULD JUST WEAR LONG GLOVES
SORRY
YOU DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO APOLOGIZE FOR.
BUT SEEING YOU WITH A BIG SCAR...
...MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I'VE DONE SOMETHING BAD.
BETTER THEY GET ME THAN YOU
HAHAHA! DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. THIS IS JUST A SCRATCH.
HUH. YOU'VE ACTUALLY GOT SOME MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS IN YOU
HUMPH
FORGET I SAID ANYTHING.
LOOK.

SINCE WE MET...
BUT DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
COMPARED TO THIS, THE SCAR ON MY ARM IS CUTE.
Now this one hurt!
...I'D NEVER SEEN THE PRINCESS CRY...
...BUT SOMETIMES, WHEN I WAS NEXT TO HER, I COULD TELL SHE HAD IT ROUGH.
AND FOR THE FIRST TIME
...I FELT LIKE...
...THIS STRONG...
...RUDE, OUT-SPOKEN GIRL...
...WAS THE ONE PERSON...

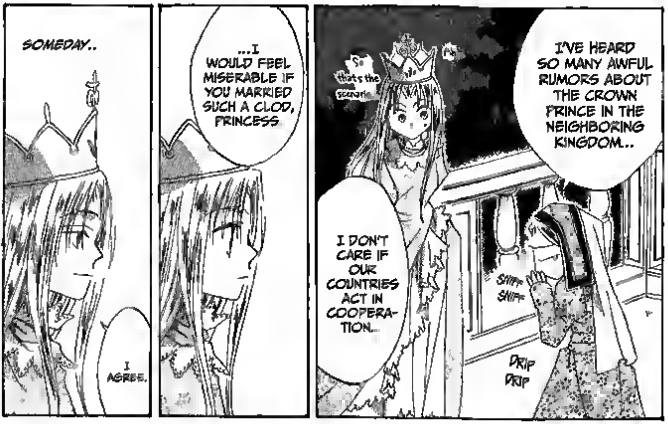
... I WANTED TO PROTECT.
SLAP
AH, WELL. REST ASSURED..
..FROM HERE ON OUT, OUR PHYSIQUES WILL DIVERGE MORE AND MORE.
YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO PASS FOR A WOMAN FOREVER.
HM?
SOON ENOUGH, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO CHANGE JOBS
WHEN YOU'RE READY, COME TO MY ROOM.
...THAT WHEN I'M EVENTUALLY RELEASED FROM MY DUTIES...
...I DOUBT I'LL EVEN BE ALLOWED TO SPEAK TO HER ANYMORE.
DRIP
THE PROBLEM IS...

PRINCESS, PLEASE SIT STILL.
OHHH!
WELL DONE!

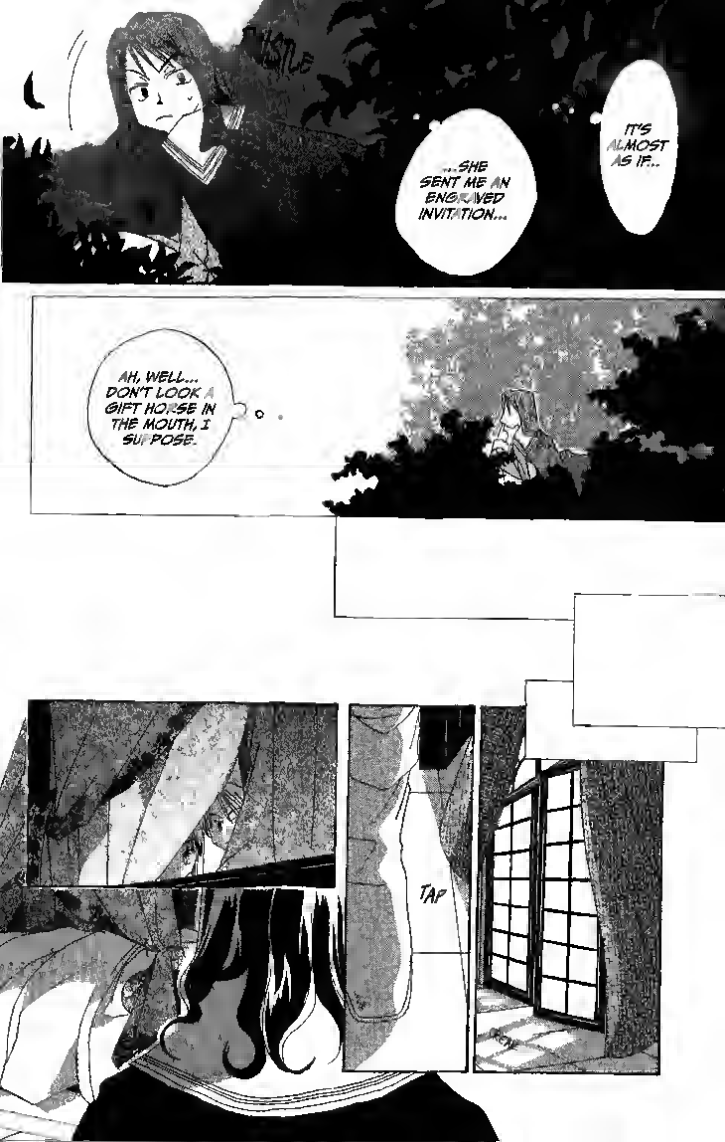
MORE! SMILE LIKE FLOWERS IN BLOOM!
YES.
TRY SMILING!
GRIN
BUT PRINCESS ..
NO ONE DRESSES TO THE NINES LIKE THIS RIGHT BEFORE BED.
MMM..?
HE'LL BE WATCHING YOU FROM SOMEWHERE...
...AND YOU WANT TO GIVE A GOOD IMPRESSION, DON'T YOU?
I'M GOING TO BE YOUR LADY-IN-WAITING!
SMISH
YOU'RE HAVING FUN, AREN'T YOU?
DO YOU LIKE IT?

WHAT A HAM..
PRINCESS!
YOU'LL CATCH COLD IF YOU LET YOURSELF BE EXPOSED TO THE NIGHT WIND
HOHO! I'LL BE FINE
I SHALL RETURN SHORTLY.
BE CAREFUL
PLEASE GO BACK TO YOUR ROOM...
THERE...
HMM... THE RUMORS WEREN'T WRONG. SHE IS A BEAUTY...
Though still a young girl...
PRINCESS...

YOU'RE AGAINST...
...THAT OFFER...
...OF MARRIAGE, AREN'T YOU?
EH...?


I'VE HEARD SO MANY AWFUL RUMORS ABOUT THE CROWN PRINCE IN THE NEIGHBORING KINGDOM...
So that's the scoundrel
I DON'T CARE IF OUR COUNTRIES ACT IN COOPERATION...
SHIFF SHIFF
DRIP DRIP
...I WOULD FEEL MISERABLE IF YOU MARRIED SUCH A CLOD, PRINCESS.
SOMEDAY..
I AGREE.

...WHEN SUCH A PROPOSAL REALLY DOES COME..
BUT THERE ISN'T ANYTHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT.
I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ACCEPT.
...SHE WON'T SAY THINGS LIKE THAT
I'M SORRY FOR MAKING YOU WORRY.
I'LL TURN IN NOW.
KA-CHA
I'M SURE SHE WON'T.
RUSTLE
GOOD JOB.
I SAW HIM, TOO.
WELL?
THERE WAS A MAN HIDING IN A TREE
BY THE WAY, YOUR ACTING WAS ATROCIOUS.
SHE'S RIGHT. PUTTING RESIGNATION INTO WORDS...
...WAS ALL ME, WEAK ME.
I would never say "Hehe!"


IT'S ALMOST AS IF...
...SHE SENT ME AN ENGRAVED INVITATION...
AH, WELL... DON'T LOOK A GIFT HORSE IN THE MOUTH, I SUPPOSE.
TAP

Oh!
INSOLENT FELLOW!
WHO ARE YOU?
ONLY PRETENDING TO SLEEP. YOU CATCH ME OFF GUARD
TELL ME, HAVE YOU READ MY LETTER?
WELL, WELL, PRINCESS
I-I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
Don't look at me here!
THE PRINCESS IS GOING TO GET MARRIED?!
SWISH
THEN IT'S TRUE?!
NO...
PRINCESS
ABOUT YOUR WEDDING WORD HAS REACHED ME THAT THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE CEREMONY COULD BE MADE AS EARLY AS NEXT SPRING
ANNOUNCE-MENT? WEDDING ANNOUNCE-MENT?

I AM AN ENVOY..
THE ONE WHO'S GOING TO TAKE YOU TO THE WIDE WORLD OUTSIDE THESE WALLS
LEAN
STARE
PRINCESS
YOU ASKED ME WHO I AM.
YOU DON'T WANT TO...
...MARRY FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR COUNTRY AND GO ON LIVING A SHELTERED, DIRECTIONLESS LIFE EXCEPT WITH A MAN.
I SYMPA-THIZE.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY ANYTHING. I CAN SEE HOW HARD THIS EXISTENCE IS ON YOU.
COME, PRINCESS!
SLUMP
LET'S AWAY TO A FREER WORLD!!
SCOOP
POP
...ARE THEY GONE?

I WONDER IF THAT WAS SHERLOCK'S PLAN..
Are you on that again?
HE WAS JUST IN SHOCK.
IT APPEARS THE TALK OF A MARRIAGE REALLY HIT HOME..
...BECAUSE HE'S IN LOVE WITH YOU, PRINCESS.
I DIDN'T THINK HE WOULD BE THAT SURPRISED BY IT..
...THE MISERABLE WRETCH!
I'M GOING TO GET HIM BACK.
YES, PRINCESS.
PRINCESS...

WE MUST LEAVE HERE QUICKLY..
...BEFORE THE PALACE GUARDS SPOT US
I'VE COME TO MY SENSES...
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
@#$%
THE PALACE
WHETHER THE PRINCESS GETS MARRIED OR NOT, THAT FEELING WILL NEVER CHANGE.
AT ANY RATE, I'M GOING TO BE DISCHARGED FROM MY DUTIES EVENTUALLY..
..BUT THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO!
BUT...
AT LEAST I'M GLAD
...THAT IT'S MY BODY FULL OF SCARS AND NOT HERS.
SQUEEZE
...SO NOW..

HOLD A MOMENT, PRINCESS.
YOU SEEM INTENT ON LEADING ME SOME-WHERE...
...BUT IT'S TOO LATE TO BACK OUT OF MY PLAN NOW.
WHIZZ
SHUK

PRINCESS!
I THOUGHT I WOULD NAIL YOU WITH AN ARROW BEFORE TELLING YOU TO GET YOUR DIRTY HANDS OFF OF HIM!
RIGHT ON TARGET!
HRRR
NO BONUS FOR YOU, SHERLOCK! WHAT ARE YOU, THE HEROINE?!
SHERLOCK...?
YOU SWIPED THE WRONG PERSON.
THIS IS MY DOUBLE. I'M THE REAL THING.

YOUR "DOUBLE" ACTS MORE LIKE A PRINCESS THAN YOU DO.
You got that he's a man, right?
MORE FOOL YOU FOR BEING TAKEN IN BY OUTSIDE APPEARANCES.
YOU'VE FAILED.
YOU WERE SENT BY OUR "NEIGHBOR," WEREN'T YOU?
QUITE SO IF THE PRINCESS OF A PROMISED MARRIAGE WERE TO DISAPPEAR,
... THIS COUNTRY'S LACK OF SUPERVISION WOULD BE TO BLAME AND TWO OR THREE PROFITABLE CONCESSIONS WOULD LIKELY BE MADE TO APPEASE MY COUNTRY FOR "BREACH OF CONTRACT."
AFTERWARDS, YOU COULD ALWAYS BE RETURNED FOR YOUR WEDDING
SO THAT'S WHAT IT WAS ABOUT?!
YOU COULD'VE TOLD ME!
Hmph!
Oh, shut up!
IT'S YOUR FAULT FOR BELIEVING A MUSHY LETTER LIKE THAT
CIRCUMSTANCES BEING WHAT THEY ARE, I COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO EXPLAIN ABOUT THE MARRIAGE THAT IS IN THE WORKS. I FELT TOO MUCH PITY FOR HIM.

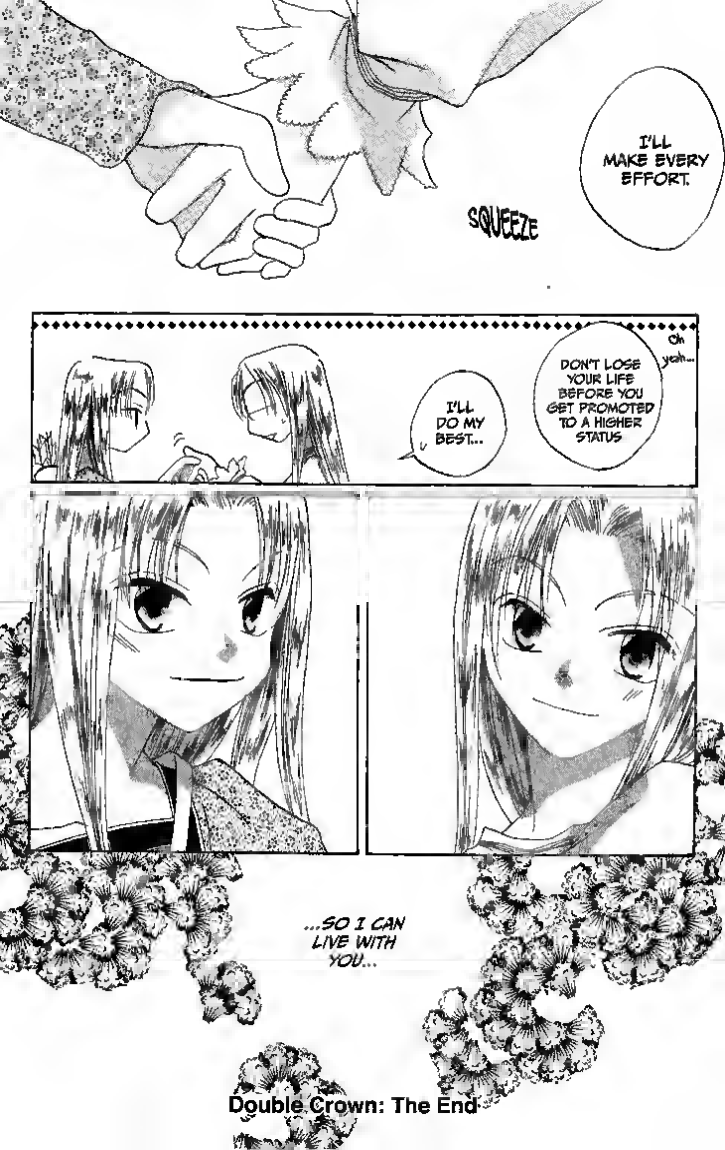
OF COURSE.
YOU CAN'T JUDGE A PERSON'S WORTH BY THE WAY THEY LOOK.
...I SEE.
IT SEEMS THAT THE PRINCESS'S VIRTUES ARE NOT ONLY SKIN DEEP.
MY INVESTIGATION WAS LACKING
GLANCE
AS YOU SAY.
RIGHT, SHERLOCK?
I'm sorry, Ash. I know the same face, but you're much stronger than me...
WELL...
I'M SURE THAT AS SOON AS YOU SET FOOT IN YOUR OWN COUNTRY, THEY'LL WANT TO SHUT YOU UP FOR GOOD...
...AND I CAN'T HAVE YOU SPILLING THE BEANS ABOUT SHERLOCK TO SAVE YOUR OWN HIDE...
...SO I'M THINKING ABOUT KEEPING YOU HERE AND PUTTING YOU TO WORK DIGGING TUNNELS OR SOMETHING.
YOU'VE SEEN THROUGH MY CHARADE...

...SO NOW'S A GOOD TIME TO MOVE ON TO MY NEXT TASK!!
FWISH
THUNK
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YES... THANKS TO YOU.

USUALLY, THE ARROWS ARE PREPARED WITH POISON...
I thought I heard it in a nightmare...
You're safe...
IT WORKED.
WHUMP
WOBBLE..
TAKE HIM AWAY.
AT ONCE, PRINCESS.
Go back to the barn.
WELL...
AS SOON AS MY FATHER CANCELS THE MARRIAGE AGREEMENT THAT HE ADVANCED WITHOUT EVEN CONSULTING ME..
..EVERYTHING WILL BE CLEARED UP.

AFTER ALL, THE PRINCESS IS AN ONLY CHILD.
BUT...
...EVENTUALLY, YOU WILL GET MARRIED, RIGHT?
I PROBABLY WILL, IF I FIND THE RIGHT GUY.
...EH?
Did you just say something unheard of...?
WHAT I'M SAYING...
MY FATHER AND I DON'T SEE EYE TO EYE ON THIS..
...BUT I DON'T NEED A HUSBAND WHO GETS MARRIED SO HE CAN BECOME KING.
IF WE'RE CONCERNED ABOUT PRESERVING THE HEREDITARY LINES
...THEN I CAN JUST INHERIT THE THRONE.
...IS THAT THERE'S A CHANCE...
...EVEN FOR YOU, SHERLOCK!

TURN
DESPITE ALWAYS HAVING A PATHETIC EXPRESSION ON YOUR FACE...
...YOU'RE A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH. I THINK...
POLISH YOURSELF UP AND YOU'LL SHINE I THINK...
OF COURSE, BY THE SAME TOKEN...
Don't look at me like that!
SLAP SLAP SLAP
TAK TAK TAK
EVERY-ONE ELSE HAS A FAIR SHAKE, TOO
STRIVE, SO THAT ONE DAY...
...YOU CAN SIT DOWN AND TALK TO ME EVEN WITHOUT A DRESS ON.


I'LL MAKE EVERY EFFORT.
SQUEEZE
I'LL DO MY BEST...
DON'T LOSE YOUR LIFE BEFORE YOU GET PROMOTED TO A HIGHER STATUS
Oh yeah...
...SO I CAN LIVE WITH YOU...

Double Crown: The End

Afterword

I'm sorry that I'm unable to reply, but if you'd like to share your thoughts about "Two Flowers," by all means, please send them to

Nari Kusakawa
c/o CMX
888 Prospect St.
Suite 240
La Jolla, CA 92037

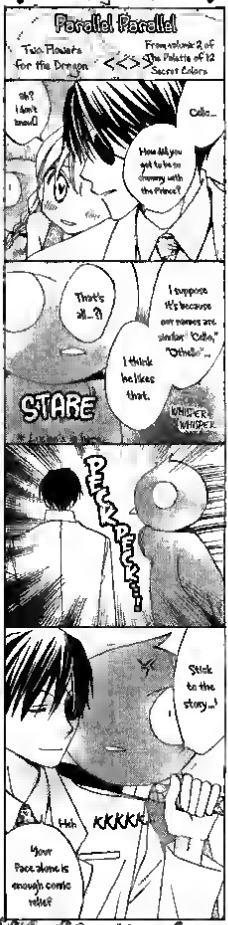
My website, with announcements about my work, etc, is:

http://lotus.her.jp/
(current as of August 2008)

I want to thank all of you for reading this, my editor, the publishing company and the stores for stocking this, my family, relatives and friends, the liquor store that lets me make my copies; Kaoru Sashi-sama and Baku Yumitsuki-sama.
I appreciate all of you.

December 2008

A little cosplay cross-promotion


Parallel Parallel
Two Flowers for the Dragon
From volume 2 of The Palette of 12 Secret Colors
Oh? I don't know!
Celia...
How did you get to be so chummy with the Prince?
That's all...?
I suppose it's because our names are similar. "Celia," "Dithelle"...
I think he likes that.
STARE
WHISPER WHISPER
PEEKPEEK
Stick to the story...!
Hah
KKKKK
Your face alone is enough comic relief

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FINALLY, LUCIEN'S MEMORIES RETURN! AVAILABLE IN MAY!

By Nari Kusakawa. The tattoo signifying Kuwan has expanded to fill Shakuya's arm. What has given him the upper hand? Meanwhile, the handmaids wonder why Shakuya's gloves are getting longer. Lucien starts to piece together memories from his youth: has a dangerous part of the past returned to haunt him? Shakuya has a hard time reconciling the difference between Lucien the boy and Lucien the man. Will the resurrected past help or hurt their chances of a romance in the future?